Images of Thought

Images of Thought:
Visuality in Islamic India 1550-1750

By

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To the memory of Ameneh Azam Ali,
Saleem Aslam and Antonio Minissale.

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PREFACE TO PAPERBACK EDITION

If one has ever felt that reading a book on the art of another culture is a formidable task in terms of understanding the social and cultural background needed in order to begin interpreting the visual language of these works of art, then this book might come as a pleasant surprise, as it aims to offer this orientation relatively painlessly. It should also provide for those who have often been disappointed by the reluctance of academic books to suggest possible meanings Indian and Islamic art convey from a number of fresh perspectives.

This edition is almost identical to the hardback except that I have taken this opportunity to correct errors pointed out by friends and colleagues. The illustrations here are also of a higher order. I have reduced the wealth of examples I used originally so that readers could be somewhat less encumbered by the long lists of art works that inevitably accompany detailed research. Thus, the paperback edition reads more smoothly and in some ways is more refined. Those interested in studying Mughal and Persian art and methodology in a more detailed manner will still find this edition useful, as I have retained much discussion of critical theory in the endnotes of chapters. Appendices are provided for the information I have removed from the main text and there is also a detailed index.

I would like to thank Som Prakash Verma, Aligarh University, for his constructive criticism and useful comments on the first edition. Thanks are also due to Andy Nercessian, University of Durham, and Amanda Millar—both of Cambridge Scholars Publishing—who have been unwavering in their support for this project and seen its potential, where other, larger publishing houses have sought the safe haven of more conventional approaches.

Budapest, 2009,

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INTRODUCTION

This book does not tell a story, at least not the kind of story of characters and events that has been told in art history many times. Instead, it tries to understand how visual language works using a number of paintings produced in India, and to a lesser extent, Iran. For modern viewers paintings of this period often appear to have a distinct charm: they combine a sophisticated and stylistically precise execution with an apparent naïveté. Produced as illustrations for hand-made, gem-like books for ruling elites, given as gifts, and passed down through generations, they have always been valued and collected. A tradition of connoisseurship has for many years categorised and evaluated this art, helping to extend a tradition of collecting. Connoisseurship has led to scholarship, often museum-based, which has had a lasting effect on much of the study of Indian and Persian painting. Dating from the early twentieth century this has been concerned primarily with documenting collections, explaining how and where books or detached folios were produced and discerning what they illustrate in order to give them titles and to some extent, an identity. This scholarship is inspired and driven by history as an academic discipline. It tends to explain these paintings by relating them to events described in court histories and other literatures as if they are visual documents of those historical events.[1] In Euro-American art history a parallel might be to explain the work of Caravaggio, for example, purely in terms of identifying narrative events portrayed in his paintings, while ignoring the artistic structure, order and conventions used to visualise them.[2]

In contrast to this kind of scholarship, the approach taken here is inspired by anthropology. The aim is to encounter and explore a culture, and to understand different ways of picturing things. *Images of Thought* isolates a number of formal principles found consistently in Indian and Persian paintings and tries to find out why they are there, and what they might have communicated to the viewer. These visual patterns form an important part of aesthetic response. They are configured coherently as part of an aesthetic order that is read, processed and enjoyed as surely as the stories these paintings illustrate. Art is thus more than a kind of documentary reportage; it is also a way of imaging thought.

From an apparently narrow research focus, the discussion of the nature of pictorial order can take on a broader significance for image makers and viewers, and those who like to read about them. The book should be a useful introduction for those wanting to become familiar with the refined manner in which these paintings were received. It also should be of interest to students and scholars of critical theory, as it shows that one of the world's richest painting traditions can

offer important insights into more general issues of visual perception and intellectual production.

While the approach of this book tries to take the best from this tradition of art history, which is discussed at the end of introduction in more detail, it is supplemented by a wider reading from various disciplines. The view that Indian and Persian art is a form of *illustration* (of a story, history, author or a copy of nature) must be supplemented by the study of aesthetic content revealed in consistent ways of dealing with space, the human figure and in the mediation of 'appropriate' and conventional idioms for representing mythical narratives and theological traditions. The attempt to understand how art is structured visually is subject to two stresses. The first is inwards: to look at a given painting and analyse its forms from within the notional limits of the depiction, to identify the contents of the painting as elements that communicate a particular narrative. The second is outwards, to relate the contents of a picture to the wider social and intellectual context. Aby Warburg, who sought to find in Western art analogies between the art of painting and various texts 'outside' the practice of this art, exemplifies this approach, which is flexible enough to utilise both inward and outward lines of investigation.[3] This is undoubtedly fruitful for Indian and Persian paintings, especially given that a majority of them are pages in a book, bound into manuscripts with text pages.

In Euro-American art histories, the theory that linkages exist between images and the wider intellectual life of a society or period has sometimes developed into highly sophisticated projects such as Irwin Panofsky's *Gothic Art and Scholasticism*, an attempt to locate art forms in scholasticism, the dominant philosophical and cognitive system of the Middle Ages.[4] This is tantamount to reading theological and philosophical traditions into the message of the image. While objections to this kind of art history are well known, and have continually been voiced in Ernst H. Gombrich's work, it remains an essential statement of intention for the art historian to leave no stone unturned in understanding a painting tradition, even if this means viewing miniatures in close relation to literary and philosophical texts. Visual perceptions are not detached somehow from wider cultural and aesthetic experience. This is certainly no less so for Indian and Persian art where it is possible to become familiar with religious, philosophical and aesthetic ideas in literature, which may be used to work up a sketch of what Michael Baxandall has called a "cognitive style" of viewing and creating pictures.[5]

Images of Thought is divided into four chapters, each analyses paintings based on approaches that question our assumptions about representation and perception. Thus the study ranges outside of the subfield and engages with a wider art history. The aim is to question our dogmas about what we mean by subject matter and meaning in order to look at Indian and Persian painting in

unconventional ways. Each chapter forms an introduction into the visual language of this painting. Chapter One: Reading Anti-illusionism questions the way Indian and Persian paintings have been understood as an art of illusion and seeks to focus on the dynamism of anti-illusionism, artistic techniques that do not try to be realistic in the Euro-American sense.

The concept of 'the artist', which has developed into a tradition in Indian and Persian art history, identifying the fine details of miniatures in order to establish 'authorship', is questioned. How is one able to see the pictorial order of Indian art if one is continually breaking it down into idiosyncrasies of style, much of which is judged by standards of European realism?[6] Using structuralist and post-structuralist critiques of authorship, in the work of Barthes and more recently, Derrida and others, this chapter attempts to clear the way for alternative perspectives on image analysis to emerge.

Another important question is related to the representation of the human figure. In Indian and Persian painting the human figure is visualised differently from the way it is in many European painting traditions before the advent of modern art. Chapter One explores why this is, offering explanations that allow us to move closer to the Indian conception of nature, the physical world, and representations of space. The chapter also examines how Indian and Persian painting transposes different kinds of intellectual and social practices into spatial categories.

Traditional art historical approaches to Indian painting are left further behind with new research presented in Chapter Two: Reading Pictorial Order. One way of trying to understand the thinking processes that are connected with image making and response is to look at how a mind might piece together various kinds of visual information to create meaning. This visual information consists not only of chromatic, geometric and compositional patterns but references to pre-established idioms. Formal analysis as an art historical method is concerned with unearthing the dynamism of pictorial order in Indian painting in different periods. A consistent pattern of pictorial organisation emerges. Chapter Two suggests the survival and repetition of formal patterns and geometrical relationships that form an intelligible pictorial order shared by Indian painters and viewers over the centuries. Perhaps surprisingly, there has been no systematic art historical analysis or typology of the formal principles of Indian and Persian painting, or any sustained analysis of the figural arrangements or chromatic structures that are also present. In a book dedicated more to general Islamic art published over twenty years ago by Alexandre Papadopoulo, the author considers some of the key compositional values in Islamic painting with some treatment of Indian art.[7] The identification of spiral forms in Islamic painting is given much attention but it could be said that despite this often intriguing compositional analysis, the approach represents a

reductionist and unnecessarily esoteric view of formal characteristics in painting. There has been some analysis of compositional tendencies in the painting of the Shah Jahan period by Ebba Koch.[8] Both these studies need to be put into perspective and developed more rigorously and this is the purpose of Chapter Two.

Not all of Indian painting is about the conscious manipulation of visual elements. The art historian's task is to examine visual patterns and devices which may be, like grammar, acquired and used by the artist and viewer, almost as second nature. It is also an important task to distinguish where possible, both deliberate and subliminal aspects of meaning derived from this pictorial organisation. One of the opportunities opened up by questioning the concept of artistic identity and authorship is to focus art historical analysis on pictorial content in other ways. Chapter Three: Reading Myth attempts to analyse the imagery of Indian painting by using the so-called deconstructive technique of reading. Instead of focusing exclusively on artistic intention, deconstruction assumes that each text, and by extension painting, contains layers of meaning which have grown up through cultural and historical processes. A writer or painter may not know it, but what he or she puts on paper has all kinds of other significance than the obvious and this 'obviousness' can be 'deconstructed' by the art historian and viewer, in order to reconstruct less obvious meaning. This kind of content has as much right to be called subject matter as the 'story' or reality the painting is said to depict. Chapter Three is not only concerned to examine resilient visual patterns and themes but to offer tentative conclusions about how these repetitive visual configurations supply, moderate and suggest meaning.

All visual traditions, including those of Western cultures, contain traces of mythical thought, part of which functions on a subliminal level of production and reception. The study of myth in anthropology, literary studies and semiotics has demonstrated these recurring visual elements. Chapter Three identifies some of these in Indian painting and culture such as the imagery of the cave, the wise men, fire, water and representations of the book and the mirror, powerful visual markers which are represented in both texts and paintings and widely accessed across various Islamic cultures again and again. Indian art is not a fixed object with a simple story to tell. Multi-disciplinary studies of the potential semantic values attached to these images and parts of images, allow us to see a range of meanings available to the Indian or Iranian viewer, one which could be recombined in personal ways. And they show us a number of discursive fields, cosmology, superstition, intertextual traditions, aesthetics and power that mediate the work of art and make it a network of relations, which changes its status, meaning and allure in the overlapping of these various fields in the personal experience of the viewer.

A crucial part of the intellectual profile of Indian and Persian painting is the complex relationship between image and text. The text not only mediates reading of the image, but the image is often an illustration of literary mythical structures, tropes and metaphors, which make this painting much more than just a reproduction of visual appearances. Chapter Four: Reading Reflexivity uses theories of reflexivity based on the writings of Foucault, amongst others, which help us to understand a rhetorical element in Indian painting similar to that used in literature. These paintings are shown as opportunities to discuss image making as part of the real world. These are by all accounts paintings that feature artists painting and people looking at paintings; they often show paintings 'inside' paintings. This is a reflexive process, as it involves images whose subject matter alludes to image making. Indian artists painted the art of painting numerous times and it is entirely open to question whether this is a form of mimesis, or whether it distances itself substantially from this traditional and simplistic view of art in an attempt to paint an underlying fascination with the moral and cognitive phenomenon of vision and how it works.

The art history of Indian and Persian painting has for too long lagged behind important methodological breakthroughs in other art histories. These can direct the focus of scholars' work to complex cognitive patterns that lie behind pictorial composition and viewing in any culture. I aim to bring the history of Indian and Persian art into the purview of this new critical analysis. The purpose is not merely to provide alternatives to traditional forms of art history but to uncover cross-cultural aspects of visual experience. The book analyses single paintings that are grouped by the kinds of pictorial order they display. It does not divide Indian painting into portraiture, the painting of flora and fauna, the illustration of poetic texts or history but looks at the laws of representation to which these genres adhere.[9]

It might be said that my approach mutes differences in painting from the Akbar period to the Shah Jahan, but this is not the intention. The emphasis has been less to outline a chronological order and more to show underlying themes, such at the resilience of pictorial order, the recurrence of narrative structures and motifs, as well as the tendency in Indian art to reflect itself. These continuities and themes have been emphasised in order to add to the variety of ways in which Indian and Persian painting (and painting more generally) is viewed.

The assumption that Indian and Persian painting is a kind of documentary record ignores the aesthetic and poetic sensibilities revealed by pictorial order and idealism, and indeed, visual language. This is a problematic term, in the sense that the Islamic Indian and Persian visual arts and painting especially do not have a systematic visual symbolism that may be deciphered by the art historian. But, like poetry, it is a special language because it has a close relationship with aesthetic sensibilities. In Indian painting, as in art more

generally, depicted objects, people, trees and animals signify to the viewer real objects in the world known to him or her. But they are also building blocks, like words, which are formed into semantic relationships with each other, within an intelligible structure of abstract design and order. The interplay of content and form can inspire feeling, intellectual stimulation and reflection; this interplay is also involved in the complex operation of cultural memory and alludes to an elaborate system of superstitious beliefs held by the image makers and viewers of this art. A combination of any or all of these responses undoubtedly had a part to play in the intellectual processing of images.

Pictorial order communicates aesthetic perceptions and meanings.[10] Like language, pictorial order may be used consciously or unconsciously, and is either intuited or intellectually perceived, depending on the ability or inclination of the viewer. And although, like language, pictorial order changes over time, it is possible to map its development. The pictorial order that structures Indian painting is a key to its character, and it is not a fixed substance. There is both continuity and change in Indian and Persian painting. Like language, pictorial order and meaning are part of a dynamic and interactive process; it is possible to trace them through particular examples, while at the same time keeping an eye on the overall pattern of their trajectory.

Mughal India

It is important to set the right tone for the art historical analysis of Indian painting in this book, not by sketching psychological portraits of the emperors, as is often the case but by discussing some of the salient political, social and intellectual features of Mughal India.

The largest and most powerful empire to emerge in the Indian subcontinent in centuries, Mughal India of the sixteenth century was ruled from an itinerant court which, nevertheless, had periods of relative stasis in Lahore, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. No other single entity in the whole of India exerted a greater influence on India's system of social stratification than the Mughal court. The court was essentially a nexus of ethnic, religious, economic, political, and artistic relations converging in the authority of the ruler, his family, his household and his servants. The relationship between the imperial court and its provincial outposts was continually renewed by the attendance at the imperial court of key members of powerful, local, dynastic nobles. The ebb and flow of ideas and contacts must have been staggering. The court also became the major institution for the distribution of rank. A system of patronage and reward was developed, often expressed in terms of military rank (*zat*) measured in thousands of horses, which was a kind of feudal arrangement whereby at least

nominally, a noble was pledged to supply the equivalent of his rank in horses and men to the emperor as a service in times of war, in exchange for the privilege of his rank. The court also carefully controlled a network of marriages, and the harem at any one time was bound to reflect the affairs of state (and the affairs between states) possibly even more than the personal taste of the emperor. A whole system of intermarriages between Hindu and Muslim nobilities was gradually developed, not only to integrate the empire but also to emasculate potential power centres that might develop away from court; such intermarriages included the Mughal imperial family itself. Prince Salim heir to the throne to become the Mughal Emperor Jahangir 1605-27 was born of a Hindu mother.

The Mughal court was the showcase for the finest cultural and intellectual products of the empire. The court was also a large employer. Wherever the court resided or travelled there followed large clusters of, merchants, artisans, architects, fountain builders, bookbinders, scribes, artists, librarians, court recorders, jewellers, tailors, furniture makers, musicians, cooks, guards, animal keepers, and personal attendants of both male and female nobility. In addition to these, there were various classes of advisors, ambassadors and professional intellectuals (theologians, physicians, astronomers and historians) surrounding the emperor, forming ever-smaller inner circles within circles.

Layers of social classes enclosed the emperor, each with their own direct or indirect access to the centre. These levels of access to the emperor became a commodity with which power bases were built in a system of favours and patronage. Also typical of the courts of this period in the Islamic world and in Christendom was the merging of the ruler's household with governmental bureaucracy, radiating from the centre. This fact was a powerful influence on the creation of formal and public space: palatial architecture of the courts of this period reflected social and political relations, in particular, the themes of access to and protective enclosure of the emperor. In the Mughal context, public display and private enclosure were mediated by a series of formal spaces and palatial structures. The display area *par excellence* of the Mughal emperors was the *jharoka*, or royal balcony.[11] The Mughals also attached great importance to the lay out of their tents and encampments revealing an intricate psycho-geography.

Ritual activity and ceremony, which took place in clearly defined and recognised visual and spatial configurations of the court were also reflected in the geometrically calculated spatial configurations of Mughal miniatures, with elaborate representations of spatial enclosure, numerous and complex gestures of fealty and allegiance, many grounded in historical and poetic traditions shared by generations of Islamic royal courts. These significant spatial patterns

and the iconography of gesture, both used for the service of communicating courtly archetypes, reflected (and were re-directed into) ideal behaviour.

The Mughals lived in a society of the spectacle organised by strict principles of visual order. Historical, literary, biographical sources point to an almost limitless ordering of visual experiences. An overwhelming number of refined, luxury objects were produced for the Mughal elite, and they avidly collected a wide variety of naturally occurring substances, in fact, an extraordinary cataloguing of all these things and of a wide range of other aspects of court life reflected the refinement of visual sensations. There was an elaborate hierarchy used to grade their favourite blood-red spinels and verdant emeralds (with poetic words used to describe their hues) and their unblemished pearls were ordered in terms of lustre, size and weight and how closely they resembled the ideal of the perfect sphere. The spectrum of subtle shifts of colour in jade to nephrite was subject to a fine visual ordering. But also, their rifles were sorted according to weight, sources of iron, manufacturer and place of manufacture; muskets were similarly organised into categories and were inlaid with gold and enamels; even imperial elephants were divided into groups according to their proportions and colour, and the same for horses, carpets and armour; their shawls were sorted according to colour beginning with the natural hues, off-white, red-gold and then on to blues and lilacs and last of all dove grey.[12] This obsessive visual ordering is exemplified in the Abu'l Fazl's '*Ain-i Akbari* ('Akbar's Rules and Regulations') with detailed accounts of all aspects of Mughal life.[13]As we shall see, this visual ordering is very much in evidence in the highly structured and ordered conventions of Mughal painting.

Poetry and philosophy offered a canon of heroic and idealised behaviour such as courage in death, ideals of justice, mercy and power, and wisdom versus material wealth. These texts reflect how the elite wished to distinguish itself from other classes. The effortlessness of poetic turns of phrase and gesture recorded for posterity show a highly valued generational inculcation. Such literature also offered a system of symbolic stratification and etiquette.[14] These aspects of ritual and ideal behaviour were visualised and fixed in Mughal painting with a language of spatial patterns and rhythms that also served to stimulate aesthetic appreciation, as well as enhance cultural memory.

As in many political and social structures, a complex diversity of power relations and networks make the simple radial model of absolute monarchy on which everything depends, inadequate. Several notable factors of court life show that the Mughal power structure was far more intricate. When the Emperor Akbar's son, Prince Salim rebelled against him and set up a court of his own at Lahore early in the seventeenth century, this was only the outward expression of a long established feature of Mughal and Iranian royal courts, the tendency for heirs to the throne to usurp power and for there to be centres of influence at

court which mediated absolute power. Some important ministers of state were more or less powerful than the emperor's sons. A power struggle, for example, took place between Abu'l Fazl, the emperor's trusted advisor and most favoured friend, showered with honours, party to the emperor's most intimate thoughts, and the heir apparent, Prince Salim, who was known to have been extremely jealous of the power and patronage exercised by the historian and philosopher.[15]

The role that the harem played in matters of politics and taste can only be reconstructed with incidental references, but most indicate a hidden, yet powerful influence on Mughal rule. There were various intrigues between male and female nobles, which illustrate that power emanated not only from the centre but also from other areas. Mughal women shared a close relation to women in Central Asian traditions (proudly upheld by the Mughals who viewed themselves as heirs to Chingiz Khan and Timur), where women adopted more assertive roles than their counterparts in the Middle East. We read accounts of brilliant women, the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of emperors, some of them Hindu, who were powerful landowners, politicians, writers, poets and occasionally rulers in all but name.[16] They were builders of mausoleums, charitable foundations (Jahangir's mother, Rajput Manmati, was notable in this regard). The Empress Nur Jahan ('Light of the World'), Jahangir's consort, was *de facto* regent and had coins minted in her own name; she also had control of the lucrative indigo trade.[17] Power was mediated in unexpected ways through the role of nurses to the princes, Mahem Anaga, Akbar's nurse is perhaps the best known.[18] Curiously, besides eunuchs, there were female guards of the harem of Abyssinian origin, and the female elite travelled in *howdah*s on female elephants. The inverted spectacle of the world of Mughal women presents a fascinating symmetry with the official histories of the Mughal emperors.

The dialogues and debates held at Akbar's *ibadatkhana* (debating chamber) in the 1570s show conservative and insular tendencies grappling with a different attitude, the kind that characterises Akbar's orders to translate the sacred texts of Hinduism and Christianity, revealing a great enthusiasm for explorative lines of inquiry that led to the exchange of views between cultures, religions and between Shi'i and Sunni traditions in Islam. In the debating chamber at the splendid palace of sixteenth-century Fatehpur Sikri, the imperial seat of the Mughal Indian Emperor Akbar, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Zoroastrian and Buddhist theologians met to debate profound issues of faith and doctrine. Amongst them were the newly arrived Jesuits, determined to use this opportunity to convert the Emperor to Christianity and bring the Mughal Empire into the orbit of Christendom. This was one of history's most significant transcultural encounters, destined to impact on the cultural identity of the Mughal dynasty and inscribed in the imagery of Mughal painting. The illustrated manuscripts of Mughal India in the sixteenth century reflect the great

cultural reach of the Akbar period. The Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and a copy of the Christian gospels were all translated and illustrated in the Emperor Akbar's reign and several copies given to Mughal courtiers to help them gain an appreciation for, or at least a tolerance of their Hindu compatriots. These works show a remarkable willingness to depict the sacred iconography of other cultures, an attitude perhaps fostered by Akbar's desire to see more tolerance between the many different cultural and religious traditions found in his empire and the fact that many wives in the harem reflected these diverse backgrounds. Because the cultural diversity of the Mughal harem was broad, this undoubtedly extended the hybridity of ideologies that distinguish Mughal intellectual life and art.

Culturally, the Mughal court was quite heterogeneous. From the Persian perspective, the Mughal dynasty evolved into a curious synthesis resulting from their Muslim Central Asian background and their adaptation to Hindu India. As mentioned in the context of women, the Mughals regarded themselves as descendents of both Chingiz Khan and Timur (Tamerlane). The Mughals did not call themselves 'Mughals', a misnomer acquired in the sixteenth century by way of the Portuguese, but were descendents of Timur and called themselves on one occasion at least, *Silsila-i Gurkhaniyya* the Gurkhanid Dynasty, a reference to Timur's title of *gurkhan*.[19] From the Indian perspective, the Mughals were Islamic invaders who brought numerous Persian ways to India. Established in India centuries earlier, other Islamic dynasties had adopted Persian cultural forms, which were manifest in court etiquette and in such arts as book illustration and poetry. Yet it was not until the advent of the Mughal dynasty that the Persian language[20] and Persian culture more generally were established as essential components of an imperial style of government throughout the whole of north and much of central India. The first generations of Mughals in India under Babur (1483-1530), and Humayun (1508-56), were Turks from Central Asia who spoke Turki (or Chaghatay) with Persian as a second language. Even Akbar (1556-1605) spoke Turki and this was understood by Jahangir also (regnal dates 1605-27). At the zenith of the Mughal Empire in the reign of Akbar this very important Mongol-Timurid heritage was filtered through Persian culture for which they had a remarkable veneration.

The Mughals adopted Persian as the language of government and for their written histories and correspondence. It is not surprising that the Mughals treasured Persian literature and avidly collected Persian manuscripts. Every aspect of the Mughal arts of the book: margin designs, calligraphy, binding, lacquer work for book covers, illumination and illustration were developed from Persian examples. We know that the Emperor Akbar had a library, estimated at 24,000 volumes at the time of his death in 1605. Abu'l Fazl writes:

> His Majesty's library is divided into several parts: some of the books are kept within, and some without the Harem. Each part of the Library is subdivided according to the value of the books and the estimation in which the sciences are held of which the books treat. Prose books, poetical works, Hindi, Persian, Greek, Kashmirean, Arabic, are all separately placed. In this order they are also inspected…Among books of renown there are few that are not read in His Majesty's assembly hall; and there are no historical facts of the past ages, or curiosities of science, or interesting points of philosophy, with which His Majesty, a leader of impartial sages, is unacquainted…[21]

A large number of these works were undoubtedly illustrated Persian manuscripts from which a taste for the Persian tradition of painting episodes was nurtured and sustained. Persian manuscripts were also present in the Mughal library in the form of certain refurbished manuscripts. The Mughals collected Persian manuscripts and added their own illustrations to them. Persian artists brought intermediary sketches or album folios to India.[22]

A large majority of the artists of Akbar's studio were Hindu and from all over the subcontinent, many engaged with the intricacies of Persian design through direct contact with Persian craftsmen. Humayun managed to attract Persian artists Mir Musavvir, Sayyid 'Ali, Dust Muhammad and 'Abd al-Samad from the court of Shah Tahmasp at Tabriz. Illuminators, and certainly a bookbinder, Mulla Fakhr, and assistants also made the trip with sketches and portfolios of work. They in turn, must have exchanged skills with illuminators and margin designers in Mughal India.

The dominant view of the Mughal mentality is that it was consistent with the early modern worldview, with an interest in rational observation, accurate historical recording,[23] political image manipulation, and the Mughal emperors are usually placed at the centre of these intellectual traditions. An examination of the various histories of each reign from the Akbar to the Shah Jahan periods shows that integrated with Islamic religious traditions, which characterise court ritual, day-to-day actions and attitudes, were a belief in the evil eye, in talismanic and apotropaic symbols, and a great deal of time was spent on rituals to do with auspicious objects and astrological signs.[24] But also the literature of the period is imbued with Neo-Platonic thought and there are several examples of the encounter of rational philosophical strains with mystical traditions.[25] These intellectual traditions are traced in more detail when we come to examine the imagery of Mughal painting.

The all-encompassing power of the Mughal court did not necessarily mean a centralised philosophy, or one approved or official way of reading texts, the world or religion. The model of a centralising power is even less relevant as a way of conceptualising the Mughal intellectual terrain where there was a co-existence of a great number of so called mentalities, beliefs, narrative structures and views of the world. The network of relations and forms of communication

in which this plethora of views and mentalities placed the individual was extensive and intricate, layered and nuanced. A different model or image of thought is needed which takes into consideration these complex relations. More useful in this regard is the philosopher Deleuze's model of the rhizome, an underground root system, which connects one multiplicity to another.[26] The advantage of using this model for understanding the intellectual life of the Mughal court is that we can avoid forming a hierarchical view of one dominant ideology from which subservient concepts appear to emanate, or on which they depend, nor do we need rigidly to isolate areas of intellectual experience which, in fact, are related to each other in a fluid system. It is possible, perhaps even necessary, to form an overall image of a multiplicity of intellectual relations among which are situated artistic and aesthetic practices and reflections. This avoids placing too much emphasis on any one factor (economic, ideological, or a particular intellectual tradition, for example) in determining the evolution or character of Mughal art. Another significant advantage of this contextualisation is that Mughal painting is situated in the context of intellectual traditions, the kind of elevated company it deserves.

Importantly for explaining the exposition of this book, the rhizome model not only describes the object of study, that is, Mughal art as part of a multiplicity of intellectual relations but also the way in which it can be studied, with a variety of art historical approaches, rather than using any one particular method. Roland Barthes characterised this multiplicity of approaches in this way:

> The variation in readings [of an image] is not…anarchic; it depends on the different kinds of knowledge—practical, national, cultural, aesthetic—invested in the image and these can be brought into a typology. It is as though the image presented itself to the reading of several different people who can perfectly well co-exist in a single individual[27]

A propensity for anthologies in literature and illustrated albums that appear to be composed of no obvious beginning, middle or end show us traditions of hybridity in Persian and Indian intellectual life. The anthologising mentality[28] encouraged an early form of scientific rationalism to live alongside magical superstition, and one person could entertain a wide array of hybrid views that to the modern mind might seem contradictory, or indeed intolerable.[29] Authenticity, historicity and fact are mediated and understood in a variety of contexts in Indian literature and art. The anthologising mentality may also be seen in Akbar's religious syncretism, which embraces multiple narrative modes. This is also evident in the training and education required for a highly valued *adab* culture (*adab* are aspects of etiquette, good manners and behaviour and the *adib*, one who has acquired these). This culture and personal refinement is based

on a curriculum of learning composed of the widest possible number of subjects from poetry to science, which were essential to a noble of the Mughal court. Such prerequisites for the education of the *adib*, or gentleman scholar, presuppose an anthologising mind. Abu'l Fazl, the Mughal court historian is exemplary in this regard, treating an enormous range of subjects with his ordering of the Mughal universe in his '*Ain-i Akbari.* The heterogeneous character of Mughal ideologies and beliefs has a strong bearing on the multiplicity of interpretations available for textual and visual narratives. These wide-ranging interests helped to form an intellectual consciousness that was also active in the processes of the production and reception of paintings. Simple identification of an illustration's subject matter is only part of the story an image depicts, as surely as simple identification of a story is only part of that story. The idea that the Mughals viewed an illustration in isolation and with a mind that resembled a *tabula rasa* oversimplifies the viewing process. The following chapters explore how the Mughal viewer of paintings identified and understood the visual language and subject matter of a Mughal painting, based on the premise that his or her experience of multiple narrative forms and meanings of poetical and theoretical texts and a knowledge of painting traditions would not, and indeed could not suddenly be abandoned in the viewing process. Chapter One is concerned to open out the range of interpretations available to the Mughal viewer and in stark contrast to an art history that restricts this range.

The Art History of Mughal Painting

The following section is a brief survey of the art history of Mughal painting and is intended for specialists and those interested in issues of historiography and methodology. While it is worth spending some time becoming familiar with the way in which the art history of Mughal painting has evolved in order to gain a perspective on why it is so important to take the different approach adopted in this book, it may be omitted by those who wish to proceed to the visual analysis of Mughal art in Chapter One.

Some of the earliest attempts to write about Mughal art recognised that it was not solely an imitative art. For Ernest B. Havell, one of the earliest, systematic scholars of Indian art, the Mughal artist possessed the "manner of the modern Cubist, only without self-consciousness and aggressiveness, Indo-Muhammedan calligraphists reduced pictorial art to geometric formula."[30] And while for him it was the aim of the Indian artist to reveal the *noumena* within phenomena ("all nature is beautiful for us if we can recognise the divine idea within it"[31]), Mughal painting was a classical and sterile art, void of some of the finer ideals of Hindu art.[32] This rather negative attitude is carried over in the work of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, where the idealist view of Indian art,

which sees its forms as manifestations of archetypes, excludes Mughal art from this rarefied air and was classified as an elitist art external to the soul of Indian culture.[33] More recently, a comprehensive survey of Western misunderstandings and prejudices in regard to Indian art have been analysed by Partha Mitter, which has sensitised us to a tradition of seeing Indian art from the judgemental perspective of illusionist technical achievements.[34] However, Mitter's work unfortunately tends to ignore much of Islamic art in India.

While some works on Mughal art are concerned to show the origins of the Mughal painting style as a synthesis of earlier Indian,[35] or Persian painting most studies by European and American art historians have continually remarked upon the indebtedness of Mughal painting to the illusionist devices of European painting and linked this to a new appreciation of naturalism and realism. Studies of this kind are symptomatic of the desire to see Mughal art in a particular, familiar way. Early in the twentieth century, the work of Frederik R. Martin and later, Percy Brown set the standard for the study of Mughal art for years to come.[36] Both Brown and the historian, Edward Maclaglan dealt substantially with the relationship of Mughal painting with European art.[37] But left unchallenged was the underlying assumption that the European element in the Mughal style was evidence of a fundamental change in the way in the Mughals viewed the world around them. This amounted to a rather ambitious claim about the efficacy of European artistic forms and tended to empower myths of European technical and intellectual supremacy.[38] This may be seen in the work Emmy Wellesz for whom, on the one hand, Persian art represented "decorative perfection" and anything "satisfactory to the eye" with "ornamental unity", on the other hand, Mughal art was realistic and "essentially naturalistic", more "imbued with acute naturalism"[39] for which European art was a model.[40] Some recent studies have even gone so far as to make the case that Mughal art's naturalist tendencies are morally superior and that a return to non-naturalistic painting (in the Jahangir period, 1605-1627, for example) was a sign of moral 'decadence' a value judgement which screens a simple disapproval of Mughal Indian taste.[41] These approaches are all in their own way indicative of a desire to classify and essentialise Indian art and they reflected European values and traits quite clearly. In this sense, the identification of naturalism in every curve of the figure and in every blade of grass was, in fact, a form of what Edward Said was to call Orientalism, a way "to codify, to subdue the infinite variety of the Orient".[42] It represented Indian and Persian art as simplistic and intellectually void, interesting only for their factual, accurate, often naive but nevertheless pretty depictions of nature and court life. In so doing, the objectification of Mughal Indian culture by European art historians is premised on the belief that the Mughals objectified their nature and their own culture in their paintings. Thus Mughal art has been subject to a series of simplifications,

one of the most ubiquitous of which regards Mughal paintings as caricatures, dispassionate creations that are simulacra of the visible world, rather than images of thought.

At some point, rather limited attempts by Mughal artists to use certain illusionist painting techniques became confused with a will to naturalism in the minds of historians of Mughal art. The Mughals' interest in animals, trees and flowers has been traced to the writing of first Mughal Emperor Babur (regnal dates, 1526-30) in the so-called *Babur-nama*, the memoirs of Babur, which contains much description of visual experiences and observations. This has often been misread as a rational interest in natural science.[43] It is often forgotten that Babur used examples from nature to express poetic and sometimes religious or aesthetic sentiments, and this is also true a century later in the reign of Jahangir (1605-27).[44] The misinterpretation of the Mughal regard for nature helps to prepare the viewer of Mughal paintings to accept that the Mughals were somehow waiting for the illusionist techniques of European art to come along so as be more able to feed their objective, scientific interest in the world around them.

At its core, Mughal painting remains conventional, hieratic and more strongly related to Persian art than to European, despite numerous anecdotal studies that have served to repress or simply ignore this characteristic.[45] This tendency remains in the otherwise superb analysis of the *Padshah-nama* (a history of the Emperor Shah Jahan regnal dates 1628-57) by Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, where an underlying assumption is that the history of Mughal painting is a march towards psychological realism and the more effective recording of historical events, with increased technical developments in depicting volume and mass.[46] These observations on Mughal art ignore the very evident and semantically significant idealising elements in Mughal painting where aesthetic considerations about composition, format and traditional schemata are emphatic, at least as much as historically accurate details. The authors often emphasise the historical accuracy of appearances in Mughal painting and underplay Mughal art as a reflection of a dominant aesthetic system presented in a field of idealising tendencies. In the same work, painting under the Emperor Awrangzeb, 1658-1707 is described in terms of inadequacy and decline compared to the naturalist painting of the previous reign, and also with the reservation that: "There is also less interest in evoking the volumes, textures, or physical richness of the material world."[47] Yet although Shah Jahan period painting has this richness of detail, there is primarily a design aesthetic which organises it. As in all Mughal art, painting keeps the graphic line around faces, insists on flattening forms with textile patterns and applies modelling selectively. In addition to this, there is the continuation from Persian painting of previous centuries of organising space in

geometrical terms, especially in the court scenes. Lines, colours, forms are bound into an abstract aesthetic that may be clearly conceived of separately from that which they depict. These pictorial elements point to a deliberately *anti-illusionist* aesthetic, which has not been given its proper emphasis. The insistence on privileging naturalism (realistic portraiture and 'proper' perspective) is at the expense of viewing abstract design and aesthetic content.[48] This is especially true of so-called natural history painting that is always judged by how successfully it accurately portrays the details of an animal's anatomy, for example, rather than purely aesthetic qualities of line, rhythm, sense of balance and overall design attributes.[49] Most importantly, this literal approach ignores how such images are located in complex semantic networks.

The highly refined ordering attitude to nature is most clearly manifest in the Mughal painting of flora and fauna, and is reflected in the Emperor Jahangir's obsessive measuring of natural objects, not for some scientific reason but because it flatters the sense of finding and recognising hidden aesthetic proportions in nature. Jahangir continually credited himself with this power of perception. If the Mughals were so deeply enamoured with nature, they would have loved it for its lack of order, nothing in the sources suggests they did.

While it is true that Mughal art did adopt various European artistic techniques for visualising reality, a transfer that is often viewed as defective,[50] art history has been primarily concerned in tracing what is reflective of European culture rather than reading the visual language of Mughal art beyond these traces. The Mughals' reluctance to surrender many of their painting techniques and devices, which differ greatly from traditional or systematic illusionism (stereoscopic perspective, *chiaroscuro, contrapposto* and the illusion of texture, for example) appears more strongly in relief when we compare Mughal painting to later Indian painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this period European illusionism reflected a new cultural hegemony in an evolving system of power that renegotiated Indian-European differences. It is only when we make comparisons of this kind that we realise exactly how much Mughal painting of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries featured a great deal of anti-illusionist and idealist content—a form of cultural enunciation that has remained invisible to most contemporary art historians. Naturalism and illusionism are relative, not absolute terms. Certainly, compared to the Persians, or the Egyptians for that matter, the Mughals were more 'naturalistic' in their painting, but how interesting that their highly refined spatial and geometrical conventions shown by using numerous anti-illusionist artistic devices and techniques survived until the British took over as patrons of art.[51] Illusionism in art is not a neutral field of artistic technical performance but a cultural space where ideological negotiations take place under the remote control of power relations. This is true not only in the Mughal period of cultural and political

activity but also in the writing of contemporary art history. Chapter One addresses many of these issues.

The art history of Mughal painting has also been concerned to show how Mughal paintings fit in with the arts of the book. These studies often skilfully use techniques associated with palaeography to piece together dispersed manuscripts, or to establish the date and provenance of extant manuscripts or other factual details about them, or they try to identify the works of artists on stylistic grounds. This characterises the work of Ellen Smart[52] and John Seyller. The latter has catalogued meticulously various copies of the *Khamsa* (literally, quintet of poems) of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (1253-1325), or single paintings of the *Hamza-nama*, a book of magical tales of the prophet's uncle.[53] Dr. Seyller also has contributed much to our understanding of the importance of inscriptions in Mughal manuscripts.[54] Various other studies focus on single manuscripts.[55] Many studies of illustrated manuscripts help us to gain some sense of the continuity of iconographical cycles but one criticism of this kind of approach is that it tends not deal with formal principles of painting, fixed on the minutiae of technical aspects and style.

It is not only the form and structure of visual language that has been a neglected area of study in the history of Mughal art, but also the analysis of visual topoi, recurrent themes and their intertextual meanings. There are some exceptions, however. One of the most penetrating analyses of a single painting in Mughal art remains Richard Ettinghausen's analysis of the well-known miniature of *Jahangir Preferring the Company of Shaykhs*, where textual analysis and comparative method build up a picture of a complex intellectual message, not merely one of illustration.[56] Another example of this kind is a short study of the imagery of light and dark in Mughal paintings provided by Robert Skelton, which assumes that they articulate recurrent archetypes that speak to the viewer with a complex visual language.[57] This approach is taken further in Chapter Three of this book. Despite repeating some of the truisms about Mughal dependence on European art, the earlier work of Ebba Koch, especially her treatment of the symbolism involved in European influenced representations showed that Mughal painting is far more complex in its use of imagery than has been assumed by many historians of Mughal art.[58]

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[1] For example, taking this approach re-introducing the Victoria and Albert Museum collection of Mughal miniatures to the reading public, see Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book 1560-1660* (London: V&A Publications, 2002); see also a number of books by Linda York Leach, *Paintings From India* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1998), which catalogues the Nasser D. Khalili collection of Indian paintings; *Mughal and*

Other Indian Paintings: from the Chester Beatty Library (London: Scorpion, 1995) and *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art in cooperation with Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), all of which are very informative, descriptive and well researched. The standard work in this genre is also, for the Freer Gallery, Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington D.C.: Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1981).

[2] This is also the case with writing that accompanies or contextualizes exhibitions. See for example, Stuart Cary Welch, *India Art and Culture, 1300-1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985).

[3] "The painting becomes merely one element in a network […] Warburg treated the picture as a whole, as an element in a wider chain of works. His analysis both isolates elements within and directs itself beyond the painting itself." Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (Camb. Mass.: Yale University Press, 1984), 164. For a fuller overview of Warburg's art historical approach, see Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Phaidon, 2001).

[4] Irwin Panofsky, *Gothic Art and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

[5]Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 36-40.

[6] The question puts into relief different objectives. The approach of attribution and the formulation of a typology of styles attempt to establish a chronology. The investigation of pictorial order does not use exact chronology but can, ultimately, support some arguments for establishing the chronology and authenticity of a painting.

[7] Alexandre Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980)

[8] Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, with new translations by Wheeler Thackston, *King of the World. The Padshahnama: An Imperial Manuscript From the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (London: Azimuth, 1997), 130-143.

[9] A good example of this kind of approach is D. Dusinberre, trans., Amina Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters, Indian Miniatures from the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), which is one of the better, general books on Mughal painting with a large number of good quality reproductions.

[10] I subscribe to an architectural theorist's definition of aesthetic experience and apply my understanding of this to the Mughal context. For Roger Scruton, "The aesthetic experience is not an optional addition to our [or the Mughals'] mental equipment. On the contrary, it is the inevitable consequence of our interest in appearances. I see things but I also see the meaning of things, and the meaning may saturate the experience. Hence appearance becomes the resting place of contemplation and self-discovery". Roger Scruton, 'Architectural Principles in the Age of Nihilism' in Andrew Ballantyne, ed., *What is Architecture?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 58.

[11] For some political ramifications of Mughal architecture see E. Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[12] For an outstanding study of Mughal court life and ritual on which my description here is based, see Annemarie Schimmel. trans. Corinne Attwood, *The Empire of the Great Mughals, History, Art and Culture* (London: Reaktion Press, 2004).

[13]See H. Blochmann, trans., *The A'in-i Akbari of Abu'l Fadl 'Allami*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873-1894).

[14] Specific authors read to the emperor on a regular basis were among others, Nasiruddin al-Tusi, al Ghazali, Sa'di, Firdausi, Nizami, Jami, Anwari and others. See H. Blochmann, trans., *The A'in-i Akbari*, 103-104.

[15] Abu al-Fazl ibn Mubarak, also known as Abu'l-Fazl 'Allami: the vizier of the great Mughal emperor Akbar, and author of the *Akbar-nama*, the official history of Akbar's reign. He came to Akbar's court in 1575 and was influential in Akbar's religious views and in the formulation of a distinct symbolism of kingship. He also led the Mughal imperial army in its wars in the Deccan. He was assassinated in a plot contrived by the Mughal Prince Salim, who became the Emperor Jahangir in 1602 because Abu'l Fazl was known to oppose the ascension of Prince Salim to the throne. But this sad demise occurred well after the author and courtier had contributed significantly to the Mughal image of kingship for generations to come.

[16] For an informative source on this subject, see Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 143-166.

[17] Nur Jahan was born Mehrunnisa (which means "the Sun of Women") in 1577 at Kandahar in present-day Afghanistan. Her Persian grandfather was in the service of Shah Tahmasp, her father, Mirza Ghias Beg (known to history as *Itmat-ud-dawlah*, "Pillar of the State," a title conferred on him by Akbar) emigrated to India with his family, during this journey, Mehrunnisa was born. After her husband Sher Afghan was killed in 1607, Mehrunnisa became a lady-in-waiting of one of the step-mothers of the Jahangir, in which capacity she came into contact with Jahangir. Mehrunnisa became the emperor's twentieth wife and received the name Nur Mahal ("Light of the Palace"); after her marriage in 1611, the title Nur Jahan ("Light of the world") was conferred upon her in 1616. Jahangir's actual name was Nur-ud-din Muhammad, and thus the name that he gave to his wife was his own first name (Nur), combined with the first part of his regal name (Jahan). For the life and times of Nur Jahan, see Ellis Banks Findly, *Nur Jahan. Empress of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[18] Mahem Anaga had the power to bring about the execution of her son's female hostages, as she feared Akbar's wrath. Nur Jahan's portrait was painted by the artist Abu'l Hasan, where she is shown, most tellingly, in male hunting costume with a musket. J. Losty, 'Abu'l Hasan' in Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Master Artists of the Mughal Court* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1991), fig. 9. As for the harem's involvement in art, Pierre Du Jarric mentions numerous occasions when both Akbar and Jahangir took European pictures to the harem for the consideration of the women of the court. C. H. Payne, trans., Pierre Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits: An account of the Jesuit Missions, to the court of Akbar* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1926). See also a *Ramayana* manuscript associated with Hamida Banu Begum, importantly highlighting the fact that the women of the court were also viewers and patrons of painting, in Linda York Leach, *Paintings From India*, 1998, cat. 9.5. Other examples bearing her seal are listed in Pramod Chandra and Daniel J. Ehnbom, *The Cleveland Tuti-nama Manuscript and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1976), 12.

[19] Gurkhan refers to the lineage leading back to Chengiz Khan. See Wheeler Thackston, trans., *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (Washington DC;

New York and Oxford: Freer Gallery of Art in association with Oxford University Press, 1999), xxvii-xxiv, footnote 28.

[20]The Persian language of the Indian subcontinent was eventually to develop into Urdu, which makes use of a very large Persian and Sanskrit (Hindi) vocabulary, especially in government and literature. Urdu and Hindi, also similarly related to Persian, are the languages spoken by the larger part of the populations of India and Pakistan today.

[21] Blochmann, *A'in-i Akbari*, vol. I, 103.

[22]The use of master copies was widespread amongst Herat artists see Priscilla Soucek, *Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's Khamseh 1386-1482* (Ph.D. diss., Department of Fine Arts, University of New York, 1971), 567. *Barbad Playing Music to Khusrau*, a folio from a Persian *Khamsa* (collection of five poems) of Nizami of 1539-42 (Or. 2265) served as the model for a *Court Scene* by Aqa Riza Haravi painted in Mughal India, even though it was never taken to India. See A. K. Das, 'Persian Masterworks and Their Transformation in Jahangir's *Taswir Khana*' in Sheila Canby, ed., Pal, *Humayun's Garden Party* (New Delhi: Marg, 1994), figs. 7 and 8. The composition (the same positions and types of tree, pool, and musician with lute to left, lower boundary) was used again in the British Library *Babur-nama*, c. 1590, f. 295b.

[23] "European realism best served the Mughals interest in nature and their close and rational observation of the visual world." Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 161.

[24] There are numerous examples in Jahangir's memoirs that demonstrate belief in these things and it is simply a modern distortion to consider these literary examples mere rhetoric. See Wheeler Thackston, trans., *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir*, 7, 11, 12, 18, 42, 57, 103, 111, 121.

[25] For an excellent overview of the intellectual ferment of India in this period, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) and Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975).

[26] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Brian Massumi, trans., *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 22.

[27] Roland Barthes, Stephen Heath, trans., *Image-Music-Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 46.

[28] A useful expression coined by David Roxburgh to describe the kind of cognition involved in the appreciation of the diversity of subjects and painting types found in anthologies, namely in the fifteenth century Persian miscellanies of Iskandar Sultan. See, 'The Aesthetics of Aggregation: Persian Anthologies of the fifteenth century', in Oleg Grabar and Basil Robinson, *Islamic Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 130.

[29] The pleasures of loosely, sometimes randomly organized narratives or pictorial collections is often viewed as a shortcoming: "It was Jahangir whose inquiring, restless mind led him to favor the album of miscellaneous subjects over a cohesive literary theme", L. Y. Leach, *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 95.

[30] E. B. Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art* (London: John Murray, 1920), 194.

[31] Ibid. 24.

[32] Havell, *Ideals of Indian Art*, 119, footnote 1.

[33] Roger Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 21 footnote 34. Coomaraswamy considered Mughal painting too naturalistic and 'other' than Indian, and excluded it from serious consideration. He also essentialised Mughal art as aristocratic and elitist, when in fact Mughal art is 'hybrid', a term to be understood in the positive sense, as intended by critical theorists such as Homi Bhabha. Mughal art can be seen as a negotiation of cultures and identities and its style cannot be traced in a simplistic, linear sense, as we tend to do with the potted history of European art.

[34]Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[35]For earlier Indian influences, for example, see Pramod Chandra and Daniel J. Ehnbom, *The Cleveland Tuti-nama* for both Persian and early Indian see Jeremiah Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: British Library, 1982), which still remains an excellent and highly regarded introduction to Indian art, as does Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Asia Society by Harvard University Press, 1987); and for the Persian influence, see Norah M. Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting, and its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India: The British Library Collections* (London: The British Library, 1983).

[36] Frederik R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th Century* (London: Quaritch, 1912); Percy Brown, *Indian Painting Under the Mughals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924). Percy Brown's work, although dated and sometimes amusing with its early twentieth century turns of phrase and outlook has some insightful observations about Mughal painting.

[37] Edward. D. Maclaglan, *The Jesuits and the Great Mughal* (London: Burns, Oates and Co., 1932), 222-267.

[38] One exception to this attitude was the critic Roger Fry who espoused cultural relativism and equality, and crucially, tried to disengage European value judgements on non-Euro-American art based on assumptions of naturalist superiority: "When once we have admitted that the Graeco-Roman and high Renaissance views of art…are not the only right ones, we have admitted that artistic expression need not necessarily take effect through a scientifically complete representation of natural appearances and the painting of China and Japan, the drawings of Persian potters and illuminators, the ivories, bronzes and textiles of the early Mohammedan craftsmen, all claim a right to serious consideration. And now finally the claim is being brought forward on behalf of the sculptures of India, Java and Ceylon. These claims have got to be faced: we can no longer hide behind the Elgin marbles and refuse to look; we have no longer any system of aesthetics which can rule out '*a priori*' even the most fantastic and unreal art forms. They must be judged in themselves and by their own standards." Roger Fry, 'Oriental Art', *Quarterly Review*, vol. 212, no. 422 January, 226.

[39] Emmy Wellesz, *Akbar's Religious Thought Reflected in Mogul Painting* (London: Unwin, 1952), 30, 39.

[40] Wellesz, *Akbar's Religious Thought*, 42.

[41]As Partha Mitter has pointed out, decadence is a loaded term that complements orientalising distortions of the East. See Partha Mitter, ' 'Decadent' Art of South Indian Temples' in Catherine King, ed., *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 2002), 94-117. According to Linda York Leach, the lack of naturalism in painting

towards the end of Jahangir's reign was due to an atmosphere at court that became "unreal, and Jahangir's painters became accustomed to subterfuge, flattery, and hypocritical elegance—all of which killed the spontaneity apparent in their earlier depictions." Linda York Leach, *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 33. Contrasting this is the "liberal, dynamic and objective" qualities of Akbar, which were qualities of mind that created unparalleled opportunities for artists to create paintings in a "naturalistic direction", 32. Apart from occasional ideological interventions such as these, the catalogue is a fine introduction to Mughal painting.

[42] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978), 78.

[43] Stuart C. Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting* (New York: Braziller, 1978), 11. For the *Babur-nama* see Annette S. Beveridge, trans., *The Babur-nama in English: Memoirs of Babur* (London: Luzac, 1969). In S. C. Welch, *India Art and Culture, 1300-1900* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Grantha in association with Mapin Publishing and Prestel-Verlag, 1993), the author reiterates that the naturalistic and documentary style of the *Babur-nama* set the pattern for Mughal painting, 141. It was not the objective of the author to explore the aesthetic preferences suggested by modes of representation and paintings are described as snap shots of Mughal court life and are cited primarily as evidence for the details of material culture, 177, 184, 188.

[44] See for example, how his description of a strange palm tree, which he ordered his painters to depict, was chosen because it reflected the aesthetic categories of straightness, harmony and presumably, symmetry, not because the emperor was cataloguing a new species or for its "naturalness". Wheeler Thackston, trans., *The Jahangirnama*, 208.

[45] Examples are Milo Cleveland Beach, et. al, *The Grand Mogul: Imperial Painting in India, 1600-1660* (Williamstown Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1978) and *The Imperial Image, Paintings for the Mughal Court*; Asok Kumar Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1978), where the author states that Jahangiri painters, "readily accepted the superior techniques of the Europeans", 242; J.F. Butler's *Christian Art in India* (Madras, 1986); J. Michael Rogers, *Islamic Art and Design 1500-1700* (London: British Museum, 1983) and *Mughal Miniatures* (London: British Museum, 1993); D. Dusinberre, trans., Amina Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters, Indian Miniatures from the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992)*;* and D. Jones, ed., *A Mirror of Princes, The Mughals and the Medici* (Bombay, Marg Publications, 1987). The subject was researched by E. Devapriam, *The Influence of Western Art on Mughal Painting* (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1972). Some well researched works on the Jesuits are by Gauvin Bailey, *Counter Reformation Symbolism and Allegory in Mughal Painting* (Ph.D.diss. Harvard University, 1996) and Gauvin Bailey, *Art of the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto 1999). See also, G. Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art and the Imperial Court of India 1580-1630* (Washington DC: Occasional Papers of the Freer Gallery of Art, 1998/vol. 2). Ebba Koch's essays and studies on the subject of European influences have often been more sensitive about the state of Mughal artistic creativity in the face of European sources, yet the idea that the Mughals relied on and were somehow indebted to European art remains: 'The Influence of the Jesuit Missions on Symbolic Representation of the Mughal Emperors' in *The Akbar Mission and Miscellaneous Studies*, ed. C. W. Troll, *Islam in India: Studies and*

Commentaries, 1, New Delhi, 1982, 14-29 and 'Jahangir and the Angels: Recently Discovered Wall Paintings Under European Influence in the Fort of Lahore' in *India and the West: Proceedings of a Seminar Dedicated to the Memory of Hermann Goetz,* ed., J. Deppert, New Delhi, 1983, 173-95. More recently the same formulas appear in Som Prakash Verma, *Painting The Mughal Experience* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[46]Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, 115-129.

[47]Ibid. 125.

[48]See for example a comment about Mughal painting: "Lines and colors seldom assume independent expressiveness but simply become the shapes and textures of the forms to which they refer" Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 29. This excises some of the most fundamental process of art, a sense of balance, rhythm and design. Beach's observation implies the artist only copied something as it was, or as he found it, and that presumably he most often found these things in a ready made state or assemblage that was aesthetically pleasing or artistic, such as only painting birds when they are in profile view.

[49] Stuart Cary Welch writes for example, that the eyes of Mansur (who specialised in the painting of flora and fauna) were "attuned to the natural and vegetable kingdom rather than abstract form" Stuart Cary Welch, *India Art and Culture, 1300-1900,* 215.

[50] In Mughal painting techniques of "modelling, of shading, of landscape recession, which were learnt from European paintings and prints…had not yet been fully worked out." Jeremiah Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, 76.

[51] See Mildred Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955) and Mildred Archer, assisted by Graham Parlett, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British period* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1992); and Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1986).

[52]Ellen Smart, *Paintings From the Babur-name. A Study of Sixteenth Century Mughal Historical Manuscript Illustration* (Unpublished Ph. D Thesis. University of London. 1977).

[53] John Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India, The Walters Art Museum Khamsa of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2002)**,** another important work on this manuscript is Barbara Brend, *Perspectives On Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amir Khusrau's Khamsah* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). See also John Seyller, Ebba Koch and Wheeler Thackston, *The Adventures of Hamza, Painting and Storytelling in Mughal India* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; London: Azimuth Editions, 2002).

[54] John Seyller, 'The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library', in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. LVII, 3 / 4, 243-349. While this tells us about what was valued to a certain extent in the historic context, this cannot form the basis of theorizing about a whole aesthetic system. Even if it did, the task of uncovering the intelligibility of the image (as opposed to its official "value") in art historical terms still remains a major concern.

[55] See H. Knížkóva, and J. Marek, *The Jengiz Khan Miniatures from the Court of Akbar the Great* (London: Spring Books, 1963); Annemarie Schimmel and Stuart Cary Welch, *Anvari's Divan: A Pocket Book for Akbar* (New York: Harry H. Abrams, 1994) for an early Mughal manuscript see Pramod Chandra, *The Tuti-name of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Graz, 1976).

[56] Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Emperor's Choice', *De Artibus Opuscula XL* (New York: 1961), 98-122.

[57] Robert Skelton, 'Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting', in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla Soucek (University Park, PA and London: 1988), 177-187. Robert Skelton still commands wide respect for his work on Indian art generally. For some of his major works and for very useful bibliographies of Mughal art generally, see Koch and Beach, *Padshah-nama*, 241-245 and Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Works, A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (Delhi: University of Oxford Press, 1994), 417-434. The latter, despite some inaccuracies, remains an indispensable reference work for Mughal painting.

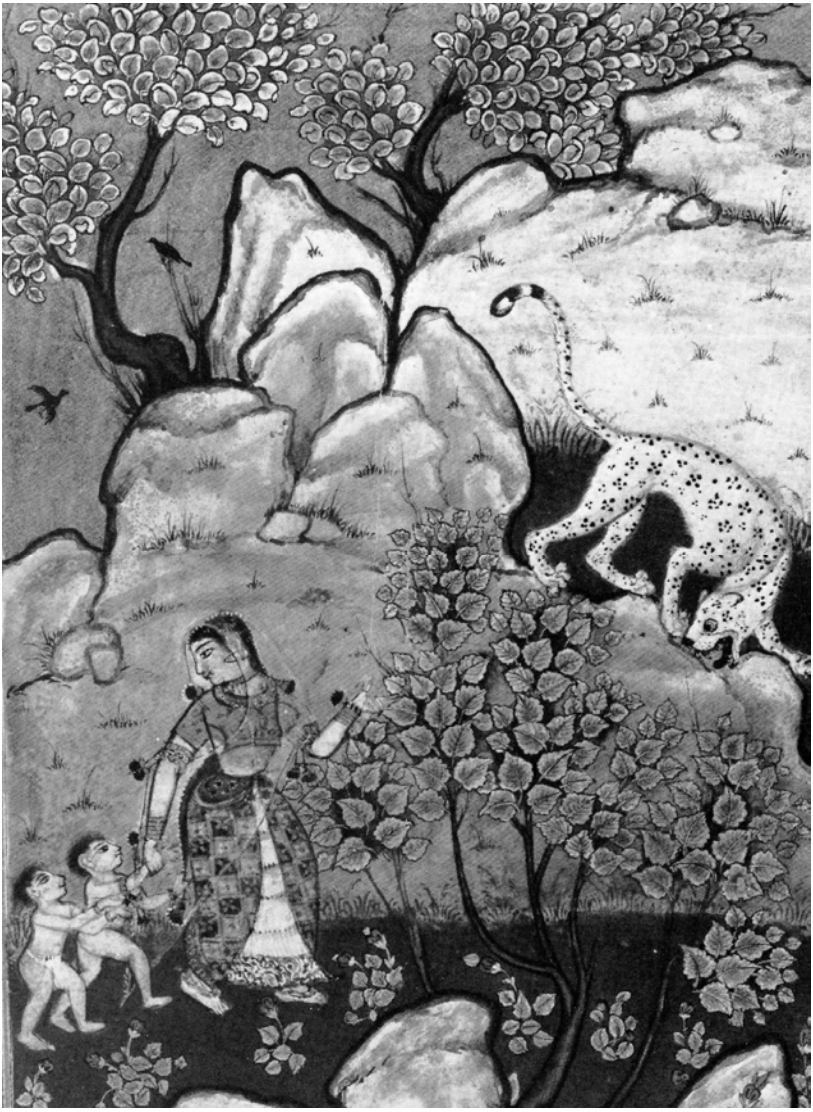
[58]Ebba Koch, 'The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors' *The Akbar Mission and Miscellaneous Studies*, ed. C.W. Troll, *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries, vol. I* (New Delhi: 1982), 14-29 and See also E. Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology: Collected Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

CHAPTER ONE

READING ANTI-ILLUSIONISM

Chapter One questions some basic assumptions about Mughal art that have been used in the past to categorise and characterise it. These assumptions are based on the view that realism and naturalism were the primary concerns of Mughal artists and that Mughal paintings should be judged by their success in using illusionist painting techniques to achieve these goals. This interpretation of Mughal painting assumes that the Mughals looked at the world and visible objects, nature, space and the human body in familiar ways that were somehow shared by contemporaneous European artists who were also busy at creating illusionist paintings for similar purposes. But there is much about Mughal painting that is not illusionist in style or intention. If illusionism has been understood as a way to amplify a sense of naturalism and realism what do these "anti-illusionist"[1] painting techniques tell us about the Mughal conception of the world around them? It is an important question because we have assumed that Mughal, or more generally Indian, techniques of painting figures, objects, space, which are not 'successful' illusionist experiments are somehow naïve, incapable of conveying complex thought, mute. An example of this is a painting in the Cleveland Museum *Tuti-nama* ('Tales of the Parrot'),[2] depicting a mother and children who are about to encounter a panther in the mountains, **Fig. 1.1**. This has been described as a "naïve" painting mainly because the work was judged to be a failed piece of illusionism, as the mountains are perceived to be a crude dividing wall between foreground and background.[3]

There are other ways to read these divisions of space. It is equally possible that the artist has *conceptually* divided aspects of the narrative in a culturally different manner. Elements of the composition and their relation to each other speak a language of danger, but without any illusionist devices of foreground and background. The division of space is communicative; the diagonal furrow through which the panther makes his way does not divide foreground from background but knowing from unknowing, the present from the future. There is a visual interplay of diagonals: the way the mother diagonally gazes towards her children, and they return the gaze while blocking their view of the panther, yet her hand inadvertently points to it, showing a sense of great irony—as she leads her own children into danger. This diagonal line is blocked by the low lying trees shielding the dark shade of the mountains skirted by the panther. It appears to cut off their line of potential escape.



1.1. *Panther Stalking Family*

The painting offsets the diagonal line of the mother and children's shared gaze with a perpendicular slope of the mountain to emphasise an imminent clash, an obstacle that intersects their path. In addition, the panther watches them, its gaze directed towards the children, whereas the mother's gaze is directed away from the panther down to the children: perhaps she has been distracted a moment. The contrast is between the mother's protective gaze of unknowing care aimed at the children, with the perilous gaze of the animal, similarly focused on the children, its body energised with menace, ready to spring. The contrast also, is one of suspense and prescience, accentuated by the unwavering purpose of the animal teetering on the crest of a leap. The family moves irresistibly to the next moment, while the panther waits for it. Rocks and trees, and the oblique angles of the composition are able to signal but are helpless to prevent the sense of an inevitable tragedy. Illusionist technique is entirely absent but the painting's visual language is eloquent, dividing space to convey different mental states.

Instead of judging Mughal and Persian art by its success in achieving "the proper perspective" or "realistic faces" (important aspects of illusionism) we need to address the elements in this art that have been silenced. What do the flat, graphic elements of this art tell us beyond our assumptions about the failures of illusionism? A less ethnocentric and more anthropological approach to this painting comes closer to answering these questions. Chapter One shows how the Mughals' response to illusionist art is problematic, complex and nuanced. It shows how even the conception of the artistic individual and artistic tradition have different values in Mughal culture.

Artistic Individuality

One of the traditional ways of studying Mughal painting is to use an approach that is more generally seen in art history, this tries to establish the identity of the artist 'behind' a work.[4] Building up an overall picture of an artist's corpus of works can answer all of sorts of questions. For example, certain recurrent stylistic aspects might reveal a way of interpreting the meaning of a particular work, or give us clues as to when a painting was finished, how it was affected by outside influences or perhaps these elements of an artist's style show how preferences for depicting certain things changed over time.

In European cultures especially, a highly evolved system of individual artistic identities developed from the Renaissance period typified in the work of the artistic biographer Vasari (1511-1574). It is from this tradition that originates a continual need and desire to define the artist's identity by attributing work to him,[5] identifying a style that is somehow personal and expressive of a character that distinguishes the painting; an approach that has underpinned the conception of the artist as a genius. Yet there are considerable obstacles in the

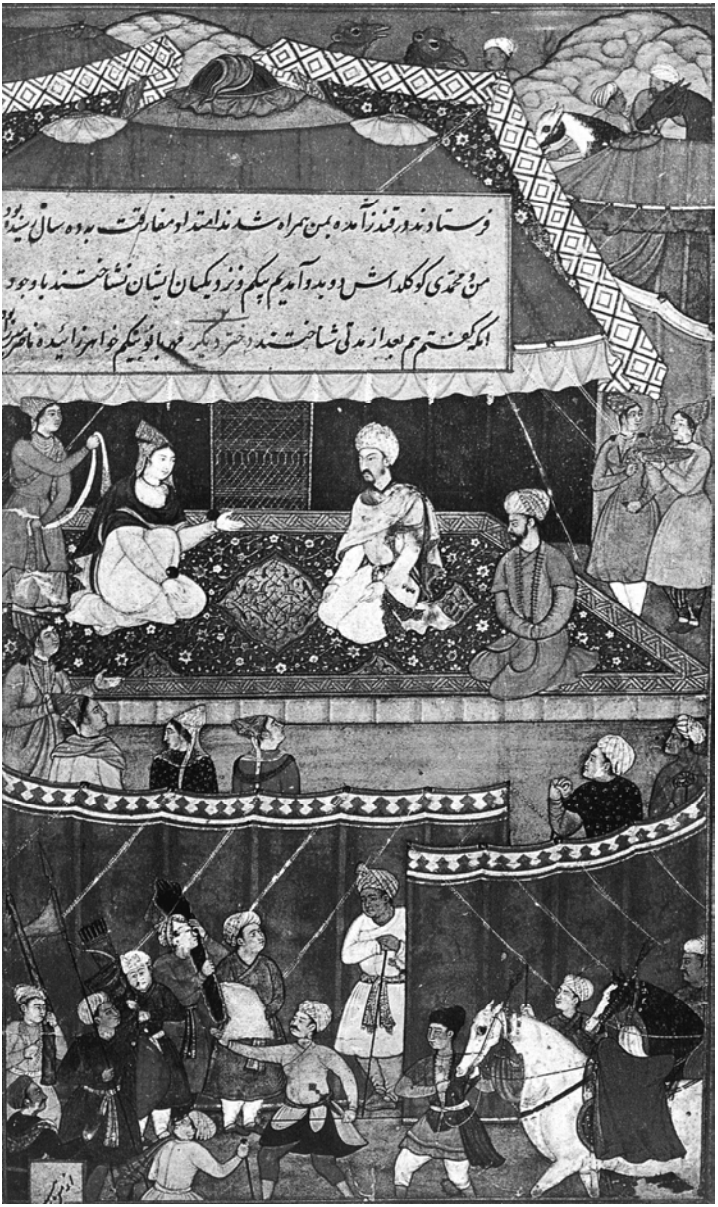
path of attempts to discover the artistic expression, intention and personality of the Mughal artist, especially as a way to interpret paintings. In Mughal art in the sixteenth century there is only a short mention of a list of artists in the Emperor Akbar's official history, the *Ai'n-i Akbari*. Very seldom are paintings signed, but rather, ascribed to artists by librarians. In Mughal art the artist or craftsman's name did not carry as much weight or value as it did in Western art, and this is even so when the status of the artist changed for the better in the Jahangir period, where the artist was still bound by social and artistic conventions and had, as such, no "independent existence."[6] Piecing together the personality or character of the artist through works that can be identified as his or hers is given more importance in the history of Mughal art than understanding the traditional visual language with which these individual artists worked and through which many of their paintings were read and understood. Much of this visual language had been established by the Persian tradition, and was a medium that allowed the artist to communicate with the viewer who may also have had knowledge of Persian or earlier Indian idioms.

What also makes the art historical approach based on the individual or on artistic genius less relevant in the Mughal context is the collaborative nature of illustrated manuscript production in the Mughal studio-scriptorium. Traditionally, in many illustrated manuscripts of the Akbar period, there might very well have been three artists working on any given miniature painting. In these examples one artist would concentrate on *rangmizi* ('colouring', a novice's role), another on *tarh* ('composition', usually by a master artist), and yet another on *chihranami* (the painting of faces by a specialist). Each of these constituents of a so-called style would be viewed discretely, and often a scribe or librarian would write an inscription at the bottom of an illustrated page and would credit each artist with their role in the painting, not for posterity but in order to distribute payments. At the end of the Akbar period, however, and especially in the Jahangir period, this artistic teamwork increasingly gave way to different specialisations to do with the development of portraiture, allegorical painting and the painting of flowers and animals. This coincided with the emergence of artists who were singled out for their specific skills in these newly formed genres. This is still, however, a long way off from the Western characterisation of an artistic calling where artists seek to express themselves in their work.[7]

While it has been necessary to research the identification of artists and the minutiae of artistic styles in order to establish authenticity, used exclusively as an art historical approach it tends to ignore patterns of visual narrative sequences, spatial compositions, systems of symmetry and asymmetry that can be established using a broad comparative method. Rather than using individuation as a principle of analysis and trying to identify an artist's hand,

this book will go in the opposite direction and try to define a painting tradition. This means attempting to trace what artists shared in a broader pattern of relationships. Whether these shared aspects of a formal language are used advertently or inadvertently by an artist will take second place to establishing exactly what these aspects are. By far the most convincing alternative to the individualist approach is that which sees concepts and archetypes, not to mention wider social customs and mythical structures present in the work of art, and not necessarily as a result of the opinion and belief of the artist but arising from a tradition or pre-established language in which the artist speaks.[8] These are pictorial contents that may differ from those continually identified as aspects of a personal or artistic style but they are equally worthy of study.

Approaches in art histories that avoid judging paintings as simple expressions of states of mind or artistic personalities are supported by structuralist critical methods in particular. The aspect of this structuralist literary criticism most useful here is the shifting of balance from the interpretation of the author or artist's intentions to the work of art itself to the various contexts of its reception. This approach is long established in literary studies, but strangely absent in the art history of Mughal painting. To take a leaf out of Roland Barthes work, for example, criticism should not focus on traditional value judgments attached to the investigation of the author's intentions but in the text itself as a system of signs whose underlying structure forms the meaning of the work as a whole.[9] Such a shift of emphasis is valid also in the visual arts and has been reiterated more recently in art history.[10] This kind of approach has become the focal point and model for structuralist pictorial criticism because of its analytical concentration on the structural elements that constitute the artistic whole. In the art history of Mughal painting even relatively recent studies[11] conceive of the Mughal miniature primarily in connection with the personality of the Mughal artist whose primary or sole motivation was to express his inner world or record the events around him, or to flatter imperial rule, rather than viewing the painting as an element in a complex system of visual traditions established before, after and through the artist. The preoccupation with constructing individual identities and motives often justifies purely political interpretations of images. The notion that painting is primarily a form of celebrating "royal prerogative"[12] reduces pictorial interpretation to a formula of premeditated, individual manipulation of images for purposes of flattery or conceit. Such premeditation or absolute control over the political message of a painting is often over determined. This kind of manipulation can only be one message amongst many others that the art historian should seek to read and translate. Many of the underlying compositional principles that are examined in Chapter Two: Reading Pictorial Order, must have been adopted in a framework of practice which was social and traditional, often going unquestioned.



1.2. *Babur received by a Chingizid Princess*

It is reasonable to assume this was largely self-limiting, sometimes subliminal, based on values to do with appropriateness, balance and order, for example, or respect for established practices ingrained to the point of automatic response, evolved into a natural predisposition that sees types of spatial organisation as self-evident, without the need for formal, verbal recognition. This may well explain the absence of compositional theory in written form in both the Mughal and Renaissance traditions of pictorialisation.[13] Similarly, the art history of Mughal painting has been at a loss to give verbal recognition to this sense of order, Compositional schema have not been completely overlooked, perhaps, but they have certainly never been subjected to rigorous study from the Akbar to Shah Jahan periods.[14]

If we look at **Fig. 1.2**, Babur received by a Chingizid Princess, foremost in this depiction is not artistic style as such but a typical and widespread sense of a traditional framework of practice which foregrounds order and decorum, appropriate for a meeting of a noble man and woman. The sense of diplomacy is obtained by symmetry and geometrical order. The forms of several hexagons predominate, especially at the centre and are reinforced by the carpet, the placement of figures and echoed above by the symmetrical pattern of tent awnings. Several figures launch their gazes at the two main figures to create lines of sight, a series of radials fixed to and magnetically attracted by the centre. At the bottom, the tent ropes conspicuously fan out to create the suggestion of a triangular mass. But while there is authority and stability associated with the meeting above this contrasts with an energised and restless group below, note however, that even this is carefully placed in a triangle. The painting is an intricate play on levels of access; the registers of the painting seen from below to the upper levels are also social stratifications signalling the social margins of outer circles and the elite of inner circles. Controlling this access to the encampment is a guard with a stick who bars the entrance to the tent. The gatekeeper is a painterly convention marking the limit, fixing the contrast of high and low. The symmetry, the registers of high and low, the layers of access, and the minutiae of other details, the romance of nomadic life signified by the camel at the outer perimeter above, the presence of royalty signified by a deliberate diagonal line of men below carrying the royal musket, sword and arrows, and the groom on the right of the painting tending his master's unmounted horse are other conventions established in Persian art. All these aspects show that the artist conformed to and was well aware of the pre-established visual language of encounters between royal personages and their retinues. These elements are present in innumerable paintings with similar subjects. This is not to lessen the impact of the artistry but to place it within a network of signs and an outline of practice shared by artist and viewer. The artist knew the form and was able to improvise within it, achieving a surfeit of

grace and dignity and an overall fluency and dynamism. The structure of this visual language and its import will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two.

In the *Ai'n-i Akbari*, an encyclopaedic description of different aspects of the Emperor Akbar's world by the Mughal courtier Abu'l Fazl, it is notable that a list of artists appears second in place next to a section on calligraphers, who are generally more highly regarded in Islamic art. The interrelationship between the dominant linear aesthetic of painting (*tarh* or outline) and the aesthetics of calligraphy has been indicated in studies of Persian art.[15] This tends to emphasise composition, placement, the relationship of figures and shape recognition over considerations of texture and the brushstroke.[16] The latter two items are usually used in European oil painting to identify illusionist prowess and individual artistic style and even psychology, but these factors are relatively insignificant in Mughal and Persian art. Many librarians' inscriptions at the bottom of pages tell us of the identity of the artists responsible for certain paintings; many more of these names must have been cut off by page marginators or simply missed out. The stock of recycled motifs used in background scenes and the ability of artists to paint in a number of styles especially in the Akbar period mean that only inferences about artistic identity or motivating personal qualities can be made, if at all. "Style" as an identifying factor often boils down to identifying isolated, depictions of objects or motifs, which may have been copied in the first place from some other source, anyway.[17] Little has been done to structurally analyse frequently used compositional principles or considered their relationship to Persian visual traditions, which is, in fact, significant.[18]

Artists borrowed motifs and stylistic techniques from each other frequently.[19] True, it becomes easier in the Jahangir period to attribute a number of works to artists, although many attributions are far from certain, and in the art history of Shah Jahan period painting a return to rather speculative identifications may be seen in art history.[20] The approach of comparing and contrasting consistently recurring visual conventions alongside investigating biographical detail or trying to piece it together in its absence, allows art historians to strengthen their analysis of Mughal painting. The appropriate and most aesthetically pleasing way for an artist to compose a scene for a painting was to use established and therefore more clearly signalled and understood compositional rules or formal structures to communicate with the viewer.[21]

Undoubtedly, Mughal painting was used for a number of functions: as a vehicle for focusing on and emphasising heroic, religious and romantic feeling; as a way to amplify storytelling; as a commemoration of an important event; as propaganda or social commentary and for recording visual data. These functions reflect more or less deliberate and conscious objectives, yet we find no writing in Mughal culture that appears to recognise these objectives, although we

assume them without thinking. It seems illogical, however, to deny that these were functions of painting. It also seems wrong to deny that Mughal painting was also meant to bring about pleasure from aesthetic perception, or to deny that painting somehow represented and reconfirmed spatial awareness, social and ritualistic divisions and hierarchies and mental compartmentalisations, or helped to root these things in the mind as they are manifest to the eye. In such circumstances, we tend to seek evidence not in the programmatic statements of artists who express their deliberations and objectives but in the paintings themselves. The sense of aesthetic order and spatial composition may not necessarily have been fixed in the Mughal world but fluid, and not self-consciously constructed but intuitively communicated and felt, continually adjusted and evaluated under very general judgments about quality and acceptability and appropriateness. The sensing of whether something is right, proper, balanced or organised is very seldom dissected and verbalised or made into a typology but it is, nevertheless, revealed in the work of art by comparative analysis which establishes patterns. Here again, the emphasis is not on individual artistic expression but on the resilience of the aesthetic tradition of order followed by generations of artists and enjoyed, whether intuitively or self-consciously, by generations of viewers. The art historian examining works of art may trace this aesthetic sense of order, engaged in both painting and viewing processes, and when transmitted by one artist to another it informs the general proficiency of artistic standards that goes unmentioned. Focus on this tends to dissolve the urgency of identifying artistic personality in many cases, in favour of examining these acculturated aesthetic standards themselves.

Illusionism and Naturalism

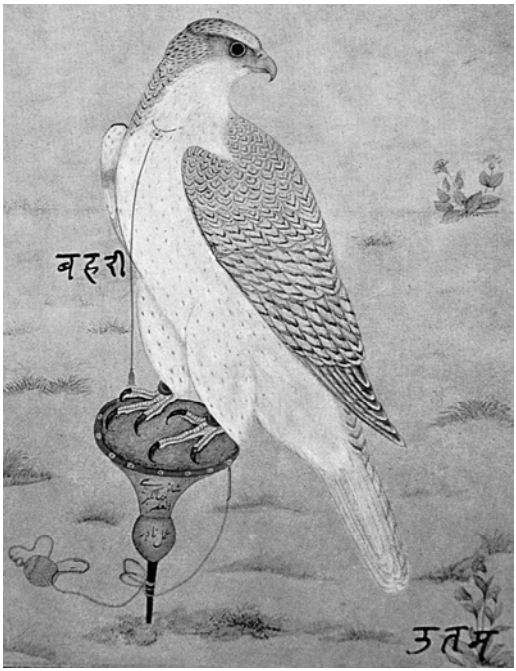
Many writers on Mughal art unthinkingly accept the illusion that the Mughals were motivated by a Romantic ‘picturesque’ view of nature, or see Mughal paintings of animals or flowers as reflections of a burgeoning scientific interest in cataloguing natural history.[22] This tends to create a hierarchical model of thought, with naturalism placed high in its structure. But these clichéd characterisations ignore the visual evidence in these paintings. Mughal paintings of nature are a visual accomplishment in formal and chromatic design principles, whether they are paintings of zebras, deer or flowers. Even the deceptively “natural” painting of a Centaurea flower in the Jahangir period, now in the British Museum[23] is a naturalism of idealised design, not pure observation; it is primarily an exercise in symmetry, balance, order and harmony, reflected in the distance between the petals and their regimented radial extension, from the symmetry of the sepals exposed between them to the symmetrical blades of grass sprouting up from the ground.[24] In addition to this

formal elegance, many paintings have been shown to be copies of older designs and works, not copies of nature.[25] Although paintings of natural subjects do become more accurate and more detailed in observation in the Jahangir period, this does not mean that Mughal painting left aesthetic tradition behind in favour of unadulterated nature study.

In nearly all drawings of animals Mughal paintings do not emphasise illusionism or naturalism in order to express the facts of nature, nature is an extension of the mind, a treasury of ideal forms and a reflection of the divine, abstract design principles and the power of the human mind able to perceive them. A corollary of this attitude to nature is a painting style for animals which emphasises line, rhythm, clarity, balance and proportion, each body being enveloped in a clear calligraphic, linear aesthetic with a consistently hieratic profile view, with hardly any three-quarter or full frontal views. Texture, volume, the arbitrary, and one could argue the very essential qualities that distinguish the animal form are suppressed in pictures that emphasise the taming of wild, inchoate nature by the finesse of the human hand and the burnished perfection of the page's surface. This is evident in the depiction of leaves in one of the most celebrated paintings of a man climbing a plane tree sprouting full and beautiful red and golden leaves and pale branches populated with sprightly red squirrels. Here, every leaf is painted identically without any effort at all to make them appear three dimensional, betraying a joyous lack of concern in the intricacies of direct observation of nature in favour of flat, aesthetic stylisation. The leaves are sparse near the centre of the painting, in order to reveal several squirrels; the leaves never appear to obscure this focus of attention, nature is turned inside out for ideal viewing conditions. As ever, the exquisite evocation of naturalism is at the expense of the natural. This is also true of the fact that in this painting the branches of the tree never appear to be anything but flat and there is no illusion that they branch out towards us, or curl away from us, like animals and emperors, they too are eternally frozen in profile views. The sense of scale is also subtlety distorted. The squirrels appear to be half the size of the human being climbing the tree. He may be an artist or artist's merchant who has an interest in hunting them, given that the brushes of the imperial artists were made of squirrel hairs taken from their tails.

Paintings of this kind have an inner logic that cannot help but dominate the token gestures given up to stray or fortuitous elements. Their clarity, idealism and sense of colour and design, line and pattern give us pleasure in an entirely different way from the dull thud of mimesis. Selective or stylised naturalism is a more accurate description of Mughal paintings of nature, rather than natural history painting or realism. The distinction may appear to be rather fine but it is essential, as the comparison with natural history painting suggests a scientific, mimetic recording of nature, when in fact the Mughal visual aesthetic, as the

Persian, is profoundly one of aesthetic design, by which nature is ordered.[26] In Mughal art, a flower is primarily evidence of the geometric and modular order of the universe; it will never just be a flower, its order, regularity and symmetry are in excess of a simplistically posited mimesis. The artist did not suddenly open his eyes to realise that nature should be observed *as it is*, in arbitrary configurations and random clashes of colour and form; he could not help but put all of this sensory information, however much more practised than previous generations, and different in comparison to the European, into an ordered and resilient aesthetic structure. To do otherwise would have been to abandon all existent assumptions, whether intuitive or considered, about the aesthetic function of art. In Mughal culture the act of painting brought nature into existence in the form of an aesthetic perception.[27] Jahangir's orders to the artist Mansur to paint over one hundred paintings of flowers (those that are still extant possess a subtle and consistent vocabulary of order) is an act that may easily be *misunderstood* as a love of nature to be associated with ideas of the European picturesque, or with (the equally European) desire to be faithful to nature.



1.3. *The Emperor's Falcon*

Instead, such paintings reflect first and foremost the emperor's summoning of nature into aesthetic and therefore meaningful existence; they signify his *jouissance* (free enjoyment and possession of and power over) nature; they reflect back on his perfection as a perfecting eye.[28] Whenever Babur and Jahangir appear to refer to Nature, it is to do with their conceptualisation of it, and as auspicious signs not with the acknowledgment of it existing outside of personal experience or sense in and for itself, or as an arbitrary event. It is inconceivable that nature could be appreciated in the modern sense, *ipso facto* without being qualified, or indeed perfected, its crude state made into a garden or by its transformation into a painting or into a system of signs.[29] This ordering attitude to nature is most clearly manifest in the Mughal painting of flora and fauna, and is reflected in Jahangir's obsessive measuring of natural objects in order, not to scientifically catalogue them but use them to articulate aesthetic proportions and values.[30]

Painting and nature are closely linked because it is through the former that nature is intellectualised and made aesthetic, and where God's creative artistry is acknowledged.[31] The aesthetic mesh through which untamed nature is viewed by the artist, and through him the emperor's choice, can be a geometrical, symmetrical or modular patterning. To consider Mughal painting as a kind of scientific nature study would have been unthinkable to the Mughals and is certainly anachronistic. The order of symmetry, design and aesthetic arrangement in Mughal 'natural' painting is an order reflecting intellectual choice and ownership, a process of perfection and aesthetic experience connected to the symbolism of appearances; it is the trace of mind, patterning simulacra into order, ultimately to denote, as in most religious societies of the time, the hand of God. This is amply demonstrated in the *Jahangir-nama*, with the emperor's description of zebra as something wonderful, its stripes a series of calligraphic flourishes written by God: "One might say the painter of Fate, with a strange brush, had left it on the page of the world."[32] And this is precisely how the painter Mansur has endeavoured to paint a falcon, **Fig. 1.3** as an exemplar of linearity; its body inscribed not only with the line (the string which attaches it to captivity and ties it to imperial property) but with the calligraphic precision of the line tracing a geometric arch from the tail, breast and head culminating in the white circle of the iris, surrounding the *punctum* the black spot of ink signifying the pupil, creating a golden spiral, echoed by the legs and the wings. Even the feathers of the animal have been transposed into the ink of a graceful calligraphic specimen: the falcon is written.

Painting was also instrumental in meditation. It was seen to have an anagogic aspect: one is led up through visible images to contemplation of the divine.[33] It would be wrong to apply Romantic notions about a random and disorderly universe or Nature, based on an unknowable, sublime and terrible

natural beauty to the Mughals. This perhaps explains the absence of any meaningful, pure landscape tradition in Mughal art. Nature is unrecognisable if not ordered, measured, brought under control, given meaning, demystified, made personal. Painting represents the branding of nature.[34] The outcome of such cognition is the convergence of Nature with pure, abstract design, symmetry, proportion, and a host of other *a priori* categories, so that each reflects the other.[35]

Illusionism and Metaphor

The subtlety of an underlying unnatural 'naturalism' in Mughal painting is only an acknowledgement of the problems associated with the concept of illusionism in the larger field of art history. Illusionism is usually taken to mean the painting of a representation of three-dimensional objects onto a two-dimensional surface; yet this is not in itself a form of illusionism. Illusionism comes into operation when the representation appears to mirror tangible objects in space so that the viewer is deceived into believing that the representation is real. The functioning of illusionism is contingent on a relative scale: the willingness, gullibility or self-deceptive powers of the viewer, factors that are culturally, psychologically, and historically mediated. For illusionism to work it needs the viewer's complicity; nothing is imbued with illusionism as an innate property. There is no definitive essence, location, style or measurement that produces the 'substance' of illusionism.

What makes matters more complex is the fact that the viewer or reader of potentially illusionist works of art may both believe and disbelieve in the illusion virtually at the same time. In painting and in literature, illusionism is a game of make-believe played by artist and observer but without the ordinary sense of intention or control associated with playing a game of make believe:

> […] the to-and-fro of play occurs as if by itself, that is, without effort or applied intention…Whoever plays is also played: the rules of the game impose themselves upon the player prescribing the to-and-fro and delimiting the field where everything 'is played' […] In play subjectivity forgets itself…In entering a game we hand ourselves over, we abandon ourselves to the space of meaning which holds sway over the reader.[36]

In European painting, in order to achieve illusionism the artist must be able to exercise a certain amount of technical dexterity, one that is usually vastly overrated, as practise often achieves the desired effect. Successful illusionism results from the mutual recognition by both artist and viewer of certain shared psychological and iconographical visual markers that signify a continuum of space between the observer and the pictorial space, as if the picture were

somehow an addition to the physical space of the viewer, not an obstacle in it. The consequence of this game is primarily the negation of the very nature of the painting: its impenetrable flatness. The fictional rupture of the pictorial surface, as a result of the shared imagination or collusion of both artist and observer, transforms the opaque, light-blocking surface of the painting into a diaphanous, breathable non-substance with tangible objects inside it. These objects depicted in the 'ruptured surface' of the painting possess weight, texture and the potential to be touched and moved and are able to reflect and absorb light as any object in the world outside of pictorial space.

The other essential part of this game is the deferral by the viewer of the distinction between the real and the copied. There is of course, a scale of deferral from the half-hearted to the spellbound. Indeed, fascination may go one step further: the viewer succumbs to the temptation of a private pleasure, allowing the mind to wander into imagining that this counterfeit world may truly exist, or has the potential to do so. These pleasures may attach to any inanimate depicted object, as they do frequently to the human body, in which case another more complex illusionist game extends from the thrill of imagining existence where it is not, to the pleasure of imagining the sentient by way of the deliberate (or accidental) illusionist conflation of symbol and signified.

In *Art and Illusion* E. H. Gombrich tried to show that illusionism was an ongoing tradition, a set of inherited practices called schemata, which affect individual artistic practice.[37] Illusionism was viewed as series of minute technical innovations or pictorial effects, perceived by both artist and viewer that appear void of any ideas or intellectual traditions in themselves and yet are the marks and signs of artistic sophistication and linear progression. This attitude has often plagued judgments on Persian as well as Mughal art[38] and art from non-Western cultures generally.[39] Certain painting techniques used to manipulate illusionism were indeed adopted by Mughal and late Safavid artists from the European tradition, yet this was seen in some way as a culmination and refinement of earlier artistic objectives and desires. This adoption represents the negotiation of cultural identities rather than a natural or merely technological progression to more refined methods of artistic representation.[40] In such a scheme, Persian art's "underdeveloped" illusionism is superseded by the "naturalism" of the Mughals, which is inferior to European illusionism.[41] This attitude has been likened to looking at Indian art using "external" standards, a contrast to how Indians have presumably examined their own culture, from "internal" considerations. [42] Primarily, this must consist of considering the flat, linear, and geometrically reducible anti-illusionist forms of Mughal art as part of strong visual aesthetic system with its own ethical reverberations rather than examples of a reprobate illusionism.[43] But many of the paintings and stories popular in the Mughal psyche deal directly with a sense of aesthetics in close

relation to the 'ethical eye' in an attempt to keep the seductive powers of illusionism at bay.

There is a fairly well known use of illusionism in Mughal and Persian art as poetic and literary metaphors for deceit and self-deceit, seduction by the senses, infidelity, and idolatry. This created a conceptual space or "safety zone" around illusionism to alert the Mughal viewer of images. From a theological perspective, illusionism is defined as inadequacy, irrational and untrue. In theological and ethical discourse, illusionism is the opposite of the anagogical, as it leads down into deception, not up to illumination.[44] Artists were not slow to pick up on the intellectual play that is possible when the beauty of the visible world is brought into question, particularly as painting may be seen to partake of this quality in good measure. The inability to comprehend a reality beyond sensory perception traps the mind in the phenomenal world: an idolater is seen as one who knows, loves and perceives only sense particulars, idolatry is often represented in stories and tales in Islamic cultures as a tale of one who has been deceived by forms of illusionism or by the deceptive visual beauty of the world which it represents. In Jami's poetry[45] this is particularly the case, and is a theme found in his treatment of the story of Yusuf and Zulaykha (the Islamic equivalents of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, respectively). The story of Yusuf's innocence being proclaimed by a baby is painted in Sultan Ibrahim Mirza *Haft Awrang* (Seven Thrones of Jami) 1556-57, where in picture, the artist has written over an arch in Zulaykha's magnificent and beautiful palace "the arch of your eyebrow is the *qibla* (the direction of praying to Mecca) of the people."[46] Zulaykha's visible beauty, her idolatry are brought to mind by the phrase the "arch of the eyebrow" but instead of settling on sensuous beauty the verse beckons the reader to go through the arch, through the appearance of beauty (of Zulaykha, the palace and by logical extension the painting of these also) in order to contemplate god, not as a visual manifestation but as an eidetic vision. The inscription invites the viewer to seek the esoteric reading of text, story, painting and sense particulars, to go beyond the seduction of visual beauty to the truth behind appearances. This may be viewed as a form of theological rhetoric, valuing one kind of vision against another, but it does this using images and their illusionism as a metaphor for self-deception. Rather than seeing the more complex message of painting viewers may be deceived by the illusionist image or by earthly beauty and dwell with the sumptuous details of miniatures and the wealth they portray, instead viewers are asked to look beyond these to the meaning they represent. And this also means for us, that we should focus less on the visual details of execution and the materials of the paint used and the skills of illusionism that the artist has used and instead try to decipher the meaning which the text and illustration aim to convey.

The warnings against illusionist paintings spelled out by stories and traditions in oral history and poetry is a way to illustrate the theme of the properly perceiving eye, which is also the ethical eye that rejects the seduction of sensuous viewing or even the naïve *sensus litteralis*. Caution is expressed in connection with the power of illusionism repeatedly in Mughal, as well as in Persian literature, and this caution is pictorialised often achieving the estrangement effect of anti-illusionism in art. This estrangement effect supports both aesthetic and ethical viewpoints, the one acting as a metaphor for the other, in fact. Paintings that convey the seductiveness of paintings (as they illustrate poetic verses which praise a more intellectual and spiritual kind of vision), creates a certain kind of reflexive art: painting which is about painting. This is examined in more detail in Chapter Four.

By reducing illusionism to an exchange of coded technical information between the artist and the viewer, art historians have showed themselves to be uninterested in exploring the semantic content of illusionism; how it can function as a myth or metaphor for example in literary, philosophical or religious contexts and in the visual arts. From both Islamic theological and art historical perspectives, illusionism in painting was not only a matter of techniques pragmatically applied to enhance narrative performance but also it was inextricably linked to the notion of illusion, and as such, functioned as an epistemological figure within discursive contexts. For centuries in Islamic literature and the visual arts, illusionism was either represented as a beautiful painting or a brilliant mirror reflection. Often this representation is doubled, so that the brilliant reflection reflects the beautiful painting for the effect of an illusion of an illusion, as in the well-known story of the competition between the artists of Chin (China) and Rum (Byzantium) in Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209) work of five epic poems (the *Khamsa*), where the artists of Chin polish a wall in response to the artists of Rum and their illusionist painting. Imagine the complex viewing process involved when this story is illustrated, when we see the depiction of a mirror's reflection of painting, which invites us to look at the image as an 'image of an image'.

Illusionism is a question of culturally different perceptions and contexts, and metaphoric power, not simply a matter of more or less expertise. The Mughals were intrigued by European illusionism but what we have also seen is that they were aware of illusionism as a deeply ingrained metaphor. Even the commonplace utterances of the Mughals in their court histories reveal attitudes to illusionism[47] as do the numerous customary compliments paid to paintings using comparisons with the legendary skill of Mani the founder of Manicheanism.[48] But these comments about the skill involved in painting have semantic value even if customary.[49] Mani was not only the founder of a religion, he was in legend a painter so perfect he was able to deceive people into

believing his paintings (and by extension, his religion) to be real and is pictured often with brush in hand painting a picture.[50] Mani is deceived by the Chinese who create the appearance of a pool of water in a well, by cutting out a sheet of crystal and then painting ripples on its surface. Fooled by the image, Mani smashes his pot on the surface and in revenge, and to outdo the Chinese artists, he decides to paint the image of a dead dog upon their own deceptive painting. His painting has the magically convincing effect of being a talismanic "repellent" (*dur-bash*).[51] Paintings are frequently compared to talismans in poetry and literature and represented by the Mughals in their paintings as if to reaffirm this attitude to images. [52]

Abu'l Fazl frequently compared magic with painting and wrote about the European artists' "magic-making."[53] The concept of an art which is as magical as it is deceptive is an echo of Nizami's attitude to his own poetry:

> All things existent, from old to new are enthralled by the word-sorcerer (*jadu sukhan*) that I am. My art has defeated the sorcerers, my magic spell deceives even the angels[54]

The language of magic survives into the Jahangir period with the inscription surrounding a full-length portrait of the emperor, which reads:

> If a hundred kings like Alexander came into the world, they would all prostrate themselves a hundred times at the glimpse of his face.
> In his likeness the painter has created much magic.[55]

The verse is deliberately ambiguous, as the magic can refer to the face of the emperor or to the image of the face, and is thus both a compliment and an artistic conceit. But what is clear is the fact that the magic consists in making a hundred kings idol-worshippers devoted to the Emperor and his image. The image has a magic power to attract and conquer. If the Jesuit sources are to be taken at face value, the reception of European images at the Mughal court was characterised by rather extreme reactions of veneration to such images. Muslim visitors to the Jesuit camp were shown pictures of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary "by which they were so impressed that they not only kissed them devoutly, but placed them reverently on their heads."[56]This response, one assumes was a sign of reverence, as it was the custom to kiss the *Qur'an* (or the Bible) and to place it on the head, rather than an example of illusionism fooling the viewer. Proof that the Mughal response to European imagery was rather more complex than a simple reaction to the wonders of illusionism is the account of one of the Jesuits, Father Monserrate to an incident on the royal balcony-window or *jharoka*:

> […] a certain noble, a relation of the king [the Emperor Akbar], secretly asked the officer in charge of the royal furniture for the beautiful picture of the Virgin which belonged to the king, and placed it (unknown to the king himself) on a bracket in the wall of the royal balcony (the famous *jharoka*) at the side of the audience chamber where the king was wont to sit and show himself to the people. The aforementioned noble surrounded and draped the picture with the most beautiful hangings of cloth and gold embroidered linen. For he thought this would please the King. Nor was he mistaken, for the King warmly praised this idea.[57]

The picture suggested the presence of the Virgin standing on the balcony in a place at the centre of the Mughal public image of kingship. Akbar's appearance at the balcony (*jharoka*) window was a daily public ritual of kingship "to the Hindus this was a sacred sight for the king; according to their ideas is the representative of God on earth."[58] The incident is thus a highly complex one in terms of art and ideology. The element of play centres on the displacement of Akbar as God's representative on earth with the figure of the Virgin Mary. This could be read as a way of further legitimising the Emperor's rule by implying the consent of the "Queen of Heaven" gracing her presence in the context of the *jharoka* display; the outward symbol of Mughul rule. Alternatively, to more cynical minds, it could also have shown that a sacred symbol of Christianity was being absorbed into Mughal political and symbolic display in order to glorify Akbar. Either way, Akbar "warmly praised this idea." But perhaps also there was an aesthetic and epistemological point to be made. Akbar's interest in European art may have helped him to recognise that the act of placing an image on the royal balcony was a sophisticated parody of European illusionism, to which the drapery and cloth obviously allude, transforming the idea of a two-dimensional painting to a dressed, real figure.[59] The dressing up of the image on the *jharoka* balcony, which is already a stage for a theatrical show, [60] is another framing device; it surrounds an illusionist object with another layer of illusionism and goes one better. There is also a play on the absent signified: while the Emperor is not there, the image of Queen of Heaven 'is', and 'present' also is the feminine principle and the principle of motherhood, both shown as preludes to the advent of Akbar. The picture of the Virgin Mary is a revealed form (as she reveals the form of her son to the world—the balcony is always a place of revealing). The placing of the picture on the royal balcony reveals Akbar as the new manifestation of the archetype of kingship with Christ as a possible precursor, Akbar's birth was associated with Christ's birth, as another Immaculate Conception.[61] A story of this kind reveals that European painting must have been viewed from the Mughals' aesthetic, ethical and intellectual perspectives not simply as a better way of learning how to paint the visible world with a mechanical illusionism. Moreover, the Mughals' appreciation of

illusionism was subtle and ironic and not to be considered an example of slavish imitation. The incident served as a jest, a play on levels of reality: religious imagery masquerading as imperial imagery, cloaking illusionist European art but made to serve as an intellectual message about Mughal life and reality.

The Body and Space

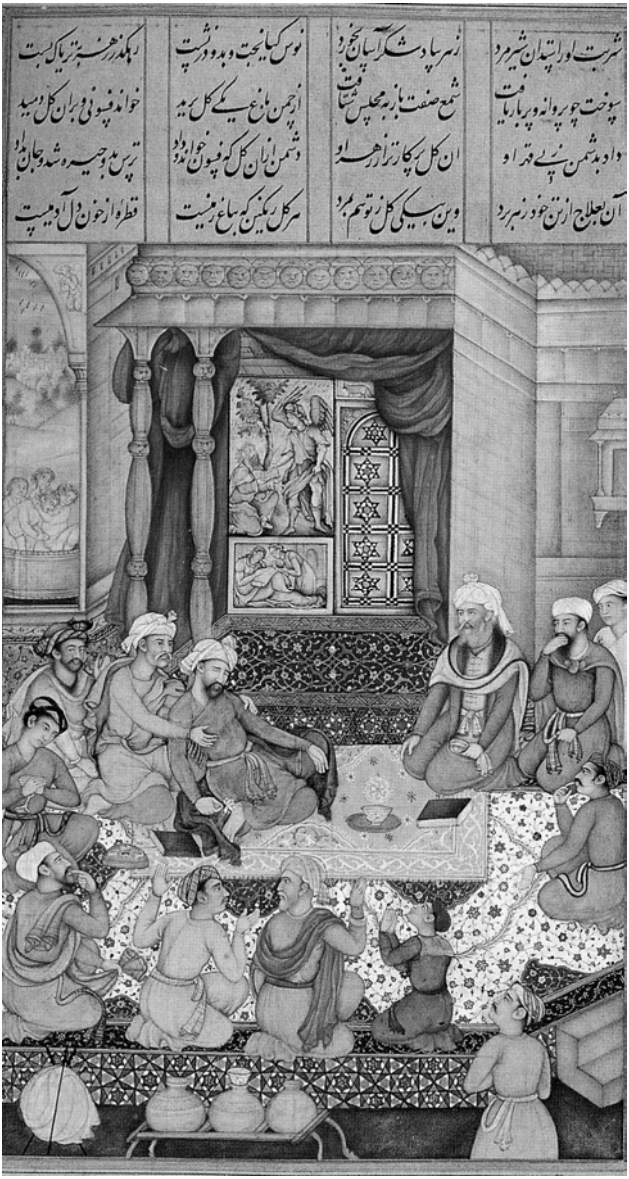
The selective use of illusionist techniques in any non-European culture does not mean that these were used or viewed in the same way as they were by Europeans. The Mughal and Persian artist and observer of miniatures conceived of space, form, beauty and meaning in different ways and these differences are strongly evident in all Mughal art, despite the superficial resemblances that some illusionist applications might suggest. More often than not, Mughal painting remained a field of signs referring to conceptual rather than to physical space. This is precisely a difference between artistic representation of external reality and inner beauty and one "constituted from unequivocally empirical sensory data or from a non-empirical 'vision'."[62] The European picture maker tried to paint perceptions of actual geographical and temporal space by showing perspective and volume and by showing the human body in relationship in this given space. This also mirrored the viewer's physical relation to the canvas as one way of achieving this. Artists also tried to achieve this through various experiments in *contrapposto*, the patterning and mimicry of the physical, tectonic and kinetic properties of the anatomy, and suggestion that these things can extend into three dimensions that they have the *potential* to breathe or bleed. This does not appear to have been adopted consistently by Mughal artists reflecting an indifference to how the body works, or what it is capable of in terms of weight, pressure, and force. Neither is there a truly committed plasticity, and certainly not for its own sake. This shows us that whereas the "paradigm of all order"[63] in European art was the depicted body, and the viewer's relationship to it and his or her own physical body, in Mughal art it is the geometrical relationship created *between* bodies that takes precedence in these paintings and it is this aspect that art history must address instead of taking the body and its illusionist projection as the basis, perhaps unwittingly, of art historical judgement. An example of this may be seen in a description of a painting depicting two disputing physicians in a manuscript created for the Mughal Emperor Akbar (regnal dates 1556 to 1605), which illustrates a set of five poems by Nizami **Fig. 1.4**. Typical of the focus of the art history of Mughal painting, descriptions of the illustrative nature of the disputing physicians follow the usual mantras about its debt to European art, and its roots in the (non-Muslim) art of the Indian subcontinent. There is a predilection for

describing techniques of painterly execution for which of course, identification of the artist is key, and his attempt to struggle for illusionist techniques:

> The figures in this interior scene are larger in the picture than heretofore, and drawn with great confidence. Miskina [the artist] unites a feeling for the volumes of the human body, traceable in Indian art from the earliest periods onwards, with ideas from European manuscript painting or prints; specifically, for the expiring physician, he may have worked from the Christ of a *Deposition*. Such a picture could have been among those brought by the Jesuits.[64]

The body becomes the key to the physical space and the "space" of meaning here, because the "feeling for the volumes of the human body" interpolates a highly specific and ethnocentric aesthetic value, the desire for the tactile and concrete roundedness of the human form, and consequently as a measure of reality. Leaving this physicality and perspectivised space behind, the Persian and Indian picture maker instead, appealed to an introspective mental apperception. Erwin Panofsky observed the tendency in later European painting such as in Impressionism and Cubism where the human figure and by extension, the visible world, and the tradition of naturalism used to depict these are deliberately distorted or suppressed in an attempt to move away from literal representation in order to express other emotional states and aesthetic messages.[65] What is common in both these modern European artistic movements and in Mughal painting is the struggle to depict the human form, not in its sensuous appearance from the perspective of a privileged viewer but as a figure in eidetic formation, or from memory. In such contexts, the objective is to portray what it is to be human above and beyond the peculiarities of human appearance. A strong case for this kind of perception involving a reading of the mental image of a portrait, as opposed to a simple mimetic observation of details has been made for Persian art and should be considered as an acculturated viewing style for the Mughals, also.[66]

In various illustrated Mughal manuscripts, the body was regarded as a unit of measurement and was part of a module system regulated by the text block. It might surprise many viewers of Mughal art and those who have studied it in detail to know that Mughal artists restricted used a system of proportions in order to represent the human body, rather than use naturalistic shading and relief. In many cases, the body and pictorial space are subordinate to a framework of measurements dictated by the arts of the book, or the frame, this integrates it into a calligraphic context and into an aesthetic in harmony with the arts of the book as a whole. This is discussed more fully in the following chapter.



1.4. *Disputing Physicians*

This attitude to the representation of the human figure has a correspondence in early Renaissance painting where Alberti put the human figure in the centre of a perspectivised and measured grid.[67] The body makes the projection of physical coherent, yet it also occupies a privileged position that is ontologically justified. But in Mughal painting the body may have a cosmically central role in depiction but not within a mathematically perspectivised space nor within the context of volume, solidity or mass. Panofsky also looked at the visual arts in various cultures and periods to examine different regular, calculable ways of proportioning the human figure as a means to transposing it into a drawing or sculpture. One of the most important points that he made was to distinguish two tendencies in this enterprise: traditions of naturalism versus traditions of proportioning the human figure according to aesthetic and cosmological principles (and he mentions the Egyptians, and in the Muslim context, the *Ikwan al-Safa*, The Brethren of Purity, who wrote in a tradition of Medieval Neo-Platonic and sometimes Gnostic thought). The latter tendency idealises the body, in some cases reducing it to geometric principles and systems of proportion in order to draw parallels with nature and astronomy. This is typical of Persian and Mughal art, as we shall see. And in extreme cases "In Egyptian art the theory of proportions meant almost everything because the subject meant almost nothing."[68] Such geometric logic and measurements tend to ignore the peculiarities of the body, whereas the naturalist tendency does not: naturalism emphasises direct observation, volume and mass with shading, surface qualities and textures often without the ritualistic and perhaps even sacred placement of the human body in a hieratic system of proportions and measurements which characterise the idealist tendency.

In the Euro-American tradition of art illusionism consisted of the projection of accessible space that is external to the viewer's physical body or gaze; the imagined entry into this space is the moment of suspending disbelief. In Persian and Mughal art, one accesses the image through an imagination that is not accustomed to using the illusion of volume of the body within systematic perspective as a key to enter this space. Both traditions of image making provide access to a place in the imagination, and encourage eidetic envisioning (the creation of imaginary images rather than those directly observed). In the illusionist tradition of painting it is more common that space is entered by imagining the body entering that space, not the mind. It might be argued that it is the mind that enters this imaginary space anyway but this is nevertheless characterised most often as the image of the body entering space. The choice of how to enter this space, or more precisely, how to understand it, is therefore by way of the body, which becomes the eye, and the eye the body. As the philosopher Merleau-Ponty was fond of asserting, the body becomes the site of

revelation, projected as an image into the image of the world and reflected back. Moreover, this sense of space and body space is also suggested by the rather intimate relationship between the viewer's body and the depicted body through empathy or through the approximation of a similar scale.[69] In the Mughal and Persian contexts, the depicted space (and the space of meaning) are entered by way of the mind freed of the phenomenal consciousness of the viewer's body, or its location, which are left behind by involvement with the fantasy world of the painting; the 'place' where the mind travels is a conceptual space that is reached without reference to projecting the body into that space.[70] This disembodied eye, arguably, disposes of the need for illusionism. Any techniques of European illusionism that the Mughal artist adopted were subordinated to the primary impulse of exciting the imagination without the reference to the *viewer*'s body, or the illusionist body.

While Mughal art cannot be said to ignore the natural structure of the body completely, the tendency towards schematisation is significant especially in early Mughal painting. This tendency returns irregularly in the Jahangir period but in the Shah Jahan period the contrast between these illusionist and anti-illusionist paintings styles sometimes forms part of the visual display of the painting. Often in Shah Jahan's illustrated court history the *Padshah-nama* the illusion of corporeal presence is minimised above and near the royal balcony, the *jharoka*, where the figures appear to barely emerge from the flatness and papery quality of the page signaled especially by the designs on the balcony wall which mimic designs of flowers in gold usually reserved for margin spaces. In a painting from this work depicting Shah Jahan paying homage to his father Jahangir, the modeling of the human form takes on European aspects of illusionism, numerous factors converge to reveal that is was an objective to achieve an overall hieratic representation not a sensuous or mimetic one. The positioning of figures in intricate geometric relationships to each other, the predominance of the line around all the facial features of the figures; the interplay of profiles with three-quarter views and profile views, flat and rounded forms, projected space and flat space, and the fact that the strongest colours are reserved for the line of figures further below, slowly becoming paler towards the top portion of the painting, with the suggestion of the sublimation of colour by light towards the royal balcony, all show an interplay of illusionism with anti-illusionism, not a adoption of illusionism *per se*.

Another major difference between sixteenth and seventeenth century Mughal or Persian pictorial construction and the art of Europe in the same periods is that, in the latter contexts, the figure is used primarily as a way to maintain principles of design and order, rather than arousing tactile responses for the illusion of real presence or psychology, or preserving conventions of the figure ground relationship. The human figure is subordinated to an overall design

along with many other objects of the visible world and within a culturally specific chromatic system. The different use of the figure may also have to do with differences in scale. Composition appears more readily to the eye of the viewer on a small scale but slips away from consciousness on a large scale, where values of *rilievo* and illusionism are strikingly obvious.[71] The 'overall design' in a Mughal painting may consist of a system of lines geometrically conceived from aesthetic and possibly even cosmological motivations, but has remained virtually invisible in art history. In such a tradition, the human body is not fetishised as the object and purpose of pictorialisation but is a prop like any other pictorial element, either directly subordinate to a system of proportional relationships or loosely dominated by them. In the European illusionist tradition, the human body is often *the* focal point of pictorial construction, its representation inscribed with a special, and sometimes sacred, iconic presence stemming from the Christian tradition of the body of Christ, the Incarnation, and encouraging belief in immediate, physical presence. Indeed, it could be said that the development of oil painting and increased illusionist and tactile qualities in image making had very important parts to play in preserving, amplifying and renewing Christian dogmas from the Baroque period. Even in recent Western art historical criticism, a formidable residue of this ideological nexus consisting of the tactile illusionist body united to the tactile texture of the pigment and the painted surface persists. Referring to the Spanish artist, Jusepe Ribera one art historian has written:

> He developed a technique in which the marks and lines traced by his coarse brushes in the wet paint create an exciting surface texture and intensify the naturalistic illusion [...] The topography of the human flesh was for Ribera the mirror of the human spirit, and by baring the nerves at the very surface of the skin he makes us acutely sensitive to the inner life of his heroes. [72]

The physicality of the body is 're-presented' by the physicality of the paint, the pattern of the brushstroke and the material surface of the painting which mirrors the skin. These material factors and processes, often textured and random in their minute patterning, are part of the viewing process and enhance the narrative structures of the imagery. These techniques and the fleshy solidity they evoke may be said to constitute a sensuous narrative structure entirely absent in Mughal visual culture, despite the comments of some art historians to the contrary.[73] In Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan period painting the dimension of "fleshy solidity" for the human form was consistently rejected and employed only when copying European works and even then, with restraint.[74] The fact that Mughal painters demonstrated the capacity for painting in this manner in some of these copies, yet rarely for the human figure in paintings of traditional subjects demonstrates, as in the Byzantine tradition of icon painting how

resolutely artists rejected the idea of painting their prophets, emperors and heroes with any sensuous volume and texture. There are, of course, some minor exceptions to this[75] but this only goes to show how the Mughals, even if they knew how to paint with refined illusionist techniques, chose not to use them in any systematic way.

In Mughal image making, the primacy of the manuscript painting tradition meant that a different visuality developed. The physical surface of the paint is burnished to create a high finish. Traces of the physical, the taut softness and warmth of the flesh pockmarked with the bristles of the paintbrush are meticulously polished away; the surface is cool and as inanimate as a jewel. Mughal art aimed to paint the human *figure*, a notation of the human body, not something that can be confused with the original. The anti-illusionism of Mughal art is a non-tactile paint surface that obliterates the brush stroke and denies identity through skin texture, musculature, sweat or veins. Never is there the desire to show the skin breathing and never is the human form shown soiled by dust or dirt as it was for example in Breughel's work, or later in the work of Caravaggio. The human body in Mughal painting is often to be read as a form and not as a sense particular which can be touched, leaving the mark of the fingerprint. Although the form may have a likeness this is not a fleshy, visceral likeness accentuated by a textured finish or by the depiction of patterns of musculature or veins. Portraits are detailed and identifiable in Mughal art but they are not corporeal in the sense of Ribera or Rubens, indeed it may be argued that resemblances in portrait painting in much Mughal painting are conceptual and non-corporeal in nature, as cool and distant as a Bronzino.[76] The two traditions, the Mughal linear, hard edged and with impeccable surfaces, versus the European illusionist art of the sensuously soft and textured could not be further apart.

In the illusionist modeling of the figure in Western academic art there is a hidden, repressed other, it is the side of the object or figure than remains unseen to the naked eye but is nevertheless assumed, deferred but intimated as an abstract given, 'behind' the figure. For Mughal miniatures, no such side is conjured; this is the flat design aesthetic that is in an equivocal relationship with the illusion of enclosed space. While there may be exceptions, the body of Mughal painting is not a body at all; it is classically sealed, brightly luminous, insubstantial and only later in the Jahangir period does it tend to acquire modeling that would suggest the fully rounded. Even then, it still appears primarily as a light receptor (not deflector) rather than an object whose surface, texture and roundness of form bring to mind the idea of touch. Although it has been said countless times that the blurring of outline used for atmospheric perspective in background scenes is indebted to European painting, *sfumato*, the blurring of the outlines of the human form to suggest an ethereal beauty or

emotional ambiguity is largely absent. There is no Mona Lisa smile in Mughal painting because it is not European painting. Subtle shifts of emotion and beauty are configured in different ways.

Space, Scale and Context

It is not only the differences in the painting medium (canvas and oil as opposed to gouache on paper) which produce significantly divergent qualities in these two traditions and in the nature of viewer response. The size of a painting tends to evoke particular sensations of about the viewing body. A life size canvas will address the viewer's awareness of his or her body in a way that is qualitatively different from the way in which a painting on a smaller scale addresses that self-awareness. In the latter case, there is a tendency towards introspection, the small scale draws the viewer closer in, this is true of European manuscript illustrations, also. On the larger scale, the depiction is a kind of encounter with the public building, somewhere demonstrably outside of the viewer's private moment (although of course this is possible on any scale). However, the grand scale is intersubjective in the sense the painting may be viewed by many others at the same time. The Mughal book illustration is by comparison a slightly more singular experience. Monumental art seeks to overwhelm the viewer, to make him or her almost involuntarily step back. One approaches a Mughal painting in a book, and tries to read the composition and the interaction of details, in large scale art one steps back to experience the composition with rather more emphatic turns of the head and neck, moving the feet, whereas, with a Mughal page, the body, apart from the eyes, and the hand turning the page, remains still.

While in the Jahangir and Shah Jahan periods physiognomic specificity develops, the artist paints the idea of a *durbar*, a court of nobles, organised by the geometry of the poses, chromatic arrangement and figural arrangements, which are all part of a general aesthetic pictorial order that communicates with the viewer's sense of balance and order. This communication is a shared, abstract space not a space that mimics the location of the viewer's body. If the body helps to define space (and inversely, space also defines the body), then the way in which a body is depicted can affect the kind of space depicted. The illusionist body, with volume and mass, *contrapposto* and movement and its much larger scale approximating that of the human body, fixed in an intelligible system of stereometric perspective, conjures up the viewer's bodily responses (the tactile or the erotic, for example) and the awareness of the physical body is heightened. This is akin to theatre, which is also a part of reading space, which conflates the physical space of the painting with the viewer's own space. In the Mughal painting tradition, the anti-illusionist body conjures up the conception

of a non-physical space. The two kinds of make-believe move in different directions, illusionist space points to the viewer's physical location, the anti-illusionist body points to a place that is nowhere in particular.

The dynamics of the painting demand that the Mughal viewer (as the modern reader and viewer) remains a disembodied and largely disinterested eye, whose presence in physical space is not addressed, in fact, the reading of the book allows for total, temporary disembodiment.[77] If the body is key in Western art, it is also key with its ability to shrink time and distance with the illusion of a living presence; these feelings are often described in relation to viewing some of Rembrandt's self-portraits, for example. In Mughal painting, we tend towards exemplification leading the viewer away from psychology. This is part of a general non-specificity in Akbar period and earlier Persian painting. In this period, faces, rocks, landscapes and buildings often lack particularity and refer to established types and treatments rather than real places or people. In many examples of the art of fifteenth century Italy, a similar practice was observed:

> […] the painter did not as a rule try to give detailed characterisations of people and places: it would have been an interference with individual's private visualisation if he had. Painters […] painted people who are general, unparticularised, interchangeable types. They provided a base—firmly concrete and very evocative in its patterns of people—on which the pious beholder could impose his personal details[78]

In Akbar period art the artist frequently painted generalised faces and this fact can be extended to our perceptions of trees, animals, landscapes and other kinds of objects portrayed in Mughal painting. The ideal generalisation of the objects depicted creates a sense of the idealism (or abstraction) of space imagined by the viewer. In the Jahangir period this began to change but idealism persists.

An important part of viewing paintings that are large, whether they are frescoes, canvases or works on paper, involves perceptions *in situ* of physical or architectural surroundings, sometimes involving more than one person. This is another way of addressing the body of the viewer. Mughal paintings have no close links to architectural settings, except the few wall paintings that survive.[79] Most Mughal paintings were meant to be seen in close relation to an accompanying text. If the *in situ* element in Mughal art exists at all it is entirely abstract, within the context of the book, the imagined space, in environment that this creates and in the interplay of the illustrative cycle with itself and with others outside of the book. While many Mughal book illustrations can be viewed as portable, virtual galleries, they cannot be viewed in a real gallery space unless the book in which they are situated is taken apart. The context of display, where the work of art must address the physical space in which it is situated or the physical space of the viewer, is absent in Mughal book art.

In the context of the book, the margin creates a framed image which provides the boundary between the interior environment of the book (mental space) and the non-book world outside it (physical space).[80] In Mughal painting it is important to remember that parts of an image may be covered with text blocks, extending further the very useful metaphor of "reading" an image. This is an appropriate metaphor for viewing an image because elements of information both from a text and from an image are synthesised into complex responses that create meaning for the reader.

Although the illustration can provide an access point into the text it accompanies, we can reasonably assume that it can also function as a semantic and mnemonic bookmarker in the mind of the reader. Reading the image itself is not a matter of beginning in a linear way to the end. The picture, much like the text, is a dynamic structure in the relationships of its elements, in that its entire surface is a potential "entry" point. This is particularly the case in a painting tradition that does not direct the eye in the persuasive manner of mathematical perspective. This entry point consists of picking out a detail, it is also a process of isolating, condensing, framing, discriminating, comparing and reading based on a particular cultural attenuation. The illusionist picture, however, attempts directly to address the viewer's body and space. It also attempts to share the same moment of viewing; in other words, because the pictorial and actual worlds are absorbed into each other by illusion, often, so is their chronological distinctness. Largely available for viewing in any setting, on a small scale and usually only aimed at the pleasure of one person, or one person reading to others at any one time, the book painting is in relation to the text, not to the body. The book illustration is not primarily a window onto reality, or an illusion projected into the viewer's space and time so that his or her reality becomes a reflection of that projection.[81] Instead, the Mughal book illustration can provide complete if somewhat brief escape from the bounds of perspective, gravity, light and dark, corporeality and the rational world. The literary phrase "magic realism" springs to mind in this regard, whether in energised grotesques of the *Hamza-nama*, the elegant fables of the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, in Jahangir's fantastical allegories or indeed, in the splendidly opulent and yet vividly dreamlike sequences of the *Padshah-nama*, Shah Jahan's illustrated history.

Mughal painting can not only modify the reader's mental image arising from a reading of the text, its image is ploughed back into the reading process when the reader retains it in memory while reading the text. Seen in this way, the painting is a guide to the mental imagery evoked by the text, and taken with one into the journey or direction dictated by the text that follows, which may be on the page itself, or after the page.[82] An excellent example of this is the splendid painting of a story from the *Haft Paykar* section of the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, **Fig. 1.5**, which may be seen to act as an allegory of the

flight of the imagination. It features a giant bird that has a figure dressed in black hanging from one of its legs; beneath it on the right is a long, slender tower, and on the left of the picture is a city with figures looking up to this spectacular scene, all of them also dressed in black.

1.5. *The Giant Bird*

Various other details of the landscape and the people working in the fields serve to accentuate the feeling of height and distance. The painting illustrates the mental image of Bahram Gur the hero who listens to the story of the Indian princess of the Black Pavilion, his imagination (that mimics ours, as readers) is

given visual form here. She tells the tale (told to her by a chain of other storytellers, whose visual, mental projections are also implied) of a king who traveled to China, to the City of the Stupefied where it was the custom for all to wear black (this is illustrated to the right of the painting with tiny figures on the castle walls). Black is also the symbolic colour for Saturday/Saturn/Matter. He then goes on to tell details of his adventure, climbing a tall tower (which we see to the right of the picture) from where he grabs hold of one of the legs of the giant bird to begin his fabulous flight. After a visit to an enchanted garden and a meeting with a fairy queen, where she promises herself to him, he is told to close his eyes (further bringing to mind mental envisioning), when he wakes up all is gone and he is left heartbroken and dressed in head to toe in black, like those in the City of the Stupified whom he now joins. The picture and reading are cyclical and self-reflexive. The story extols the virtues of the visual imagination and its richness, only to enforce around this a sense of an ethical framework, which is supposed to pull the reader and Bahram Gur's sense of flight (the flight of the imagination) down to the gravity of the moral of the tale: keeping the passions in check. The depiction of this tale cleverly suggests both past, present and future of the tale: the tower is the beginning of the king's adventure the bird lifting away the king is the active present and the future is suggested by the king who is dressed in black while hanging on to the bird's leg and the figures in black in the City of the Stupified. The image is read from right to left mimicking the bird that travels from right to left and in the same direction as the cursive script on the page that identifies the great bird and the king, swept into the air. In a sense, the bird takes us through time and space from one narrative point to another. It is mnemonic device for several time frames in the story, and gives us a sense of mental flight, which follows the contours of the cyclical narrative. And of course, all sorts of cosmological analogies are possible with Nizami and cooperatively with pictorialisations of his poetry.

The painting cycle is a parallel form of reading of the text; the text another way of reading the image. The image supplies abstractions of the text, and opportunities for re-entry into the story and into memory, and accompanies the text with a creative tension between reading, visualising images, expectation, idealisation and subconscious processes. The choice of depicting certain scenes in an illustrative cycle emphasises and displaces parts of the story within a framework of traditional perceptions of that story, but also innovative choices can arise if parts of the story complement, enhance or are analogous with contemporary events, or even if they strike a chord in the supervisor or patron's personality and emotional history. But the illustrative cycle is also a way of traveling through textual, metaphoric and non-chronological space, in fact, any space other than that which the viewer literally occupies or addresses. The illustrations in a book may also be seen as opportunities to reflect or meditate

upon the complexities of the text; they not only disclose the assumption that images have the power to epitomise the text in terms of magnifying and emphasising (or in Freud's term, condensing) ideas in the story, they also aid internal visualisation that is the natural process of all reading. They also help organise the memory.[83] The illustrative cycle may also exercise the imagination beyond the limitations of scientific, prosaic and physical space. The painting of the great bird with the king hanging onto physical and mental flight can be an entry point to the beginning, middle or end of the story, and because of its multiple time frames it may epitomise all of it and its cyclical nature. The painting provides re-access to the text but also accesses a place in a stream of thoughts and mental images. It is figuratively and literally a *pass partout* for the compartments of the imagination fed by the text. And this sense of exploration is sustained by the loving detail bestowed on the pictorialisation of the text by the Mughal artist but which also tells its own story

Condensed Space and Flatness

The term *horror vacui*, in Latin, literally, fear of empty space or fear of emptiness[84] has become a cliché to describe a design aesthetic in kinds of Islamic art that densely patterns or adds ornament to space, appearing to condense it.[85] Some of the negative implications of this term are that space is somehow polluted by an unhealthy, introspective, excessive or irrational compulsion to make marks or interlocking patterns covering all available space and that this is done without careful judgement or restraint. It is often used in the same breath to describe so-called barbarian art and betrays a distaste for the ambiguous or unintelligible use of space that results from the use of decorative patterns in the foreground that seem to blend into equal relationships with the background.[86] Some of these misunderstandings are probably based on the European artistic tradition of clearly demarcating the figure and ground relationship. Traditionally, the figure has been considered the 'real' subject, and the ground 'merely' the environment in which it is contained, a 'negative' or 'empty' space.[87] This is clearly in conflict with an illusionist visual language that stresses background as equally as foreground, **Fig. 1.1**.

It may come as no surprise that in Mughal art the background is frequently given as much attention and presence as objects in the foreground and this appears to condense the space between them, creating the appearance of flatness and juxtaposing densely patterned areas that do not appear to have breathing spaces between them. Several historians of Mughal art have demonstrated a distinct antipathy towards Mughal painting that does not conform to their own sense of decorum, or they merely display an inability to accept this admittedly very different kind of design aesthetic.[88] Some have ventured to imply that

pictorial space that is condensed in this way, appearing to flatten volume and then covered over with complex ornament is a sign of indulgence, decadence, even despotism.[89]

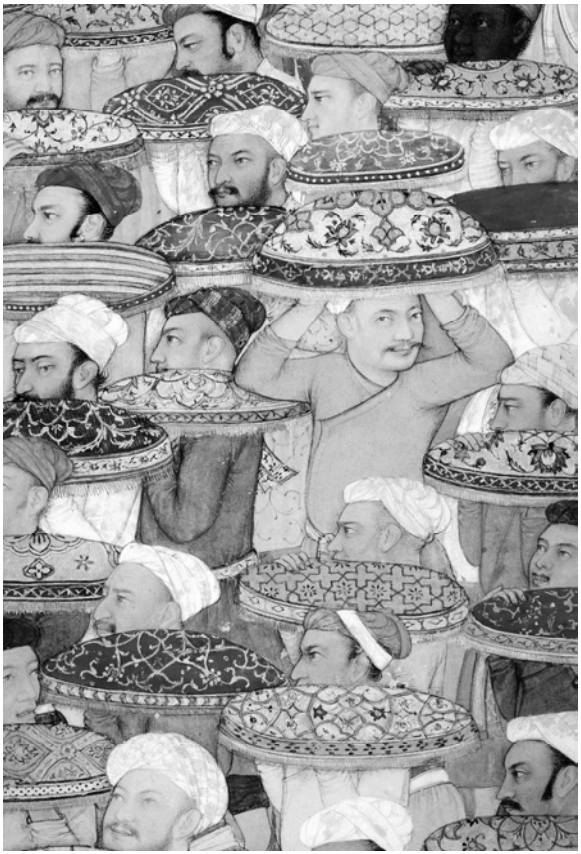
These attitudes to the elaborate and sophisticated compositions of Mughal decorative and pictorial art show an inability to accept or understand the complexity of abstract design embedded in the appearance of reality. Yet even when this design is intelligible and simple instead of densely patterned, or organised, it is "irritatingly simple and symmetrical."[90] Moreover, the kind of Shah Jahan period ornamental design that is clearly rational or geometrical is a reflection of a tendency towards intolerance of non-Islamic cultural traditions because of its excess of order and desire to control.[91] Like much of Islamic art, it seems that Mughal art sometimes cannot win, trapped by an Orientalist double negative, either because of its rich and exuberant detail attributed (with traces of xenophobia) to decadent excess, or for its carefully designed geometrical compositions that are supposed to betray a menacing calculation or childlike naïveté.

The kind of painting that these authors have in mind may be seen in the complex composition represented in **Fig. 1.6**. It is a portion of a larger painting that is, in fact, very detailed, from Shah Jahan's *Padshah-nama* the folios of which have some of the finest examples of Mughal painting. It shows servants delivering gifts for Prince Dara Shikoh's wedding and appears rather like a game of hide and seek, with the faces and gazes of the servants shown in between and under different trays of gifts covered with various vividly coloured textile patterns and designs. The painting is flat denial of the figure ground relationship. But rather than make value judgements from the outside about the intensity of detail and ambiguous space in a painting of this kind or the kind of modelling we should expect, we might try to see what this design aesthetic tells us about attitudes to space and representation and what it tells us of aesthetic enjoyment. One of the very rare occasions where this kind of intricate patterning has been described in more positive terms in Islamic painting is a comment by Alexandre Papadopoulou, who wrote:

> […] what counts within the autonomous world of each miniature is the exact position of each colour area with its specific decorative elements forming more or less dense, more or less rapid groups, each of which enters the relationship with all the other groups in their separate allotted positions so as to make up a tightly woven nexus of relationships of density, tempo and color[92]

In addition to meeting the requirements of viewers who find pleasure in the detailed interplay of colours, with patterns and with forms, as well as with faces, paintings such as that typified by **Fig. 1.6** show great energy and ingenuity. There appears also to be a synergy between the display of wealth

and display of detail. But note that the wealth here is concealed from our sight by the elaborate textile coverings. The embarrassment of riches is conveyed not literally by showing gold or precious jewels but by achieving a visual dazzle, a stimulation of the visual processing caused by a complex multiplicity of abstract elements based on the alternation of classic design schemes, flowering spiral scrolls, geometric strap work, interlaced, cusped medallions, a rhythm of contrasts, relieved by harmonies, complementary colours and repeats and by the knowing glances of those portrayed. There is both order and the semblance of riotous disorder here, stimulating saccadic rhythms into regular and irregular movements, inviting the adjustments in focus to suggest the festivity of the occasion.



1.6. *Dara Shikoh's Wedding, detail*

Such a reappraisal of the complex visual processes at work here, engaging the viewer's sense of play, challenging the intellect, makes the term ornament, used to describe a painting such as this irrelevant. On the contrary, this is not ornament but a series of denotations of abstract thought that the viewer is entirely capable and at liberty to follow.

The visual dazzle is also produced by the display of skill, the skill of miniaturising. Although, to the Mughal viewer, these paintings were not miniatures but regular in size,[93] at least the size they were used to, and the *Padshah-nama* paintings are much larger than average Mughal book illustrations (averaging 35 x 25 cms), the ability to paint tiny details, and details within details, and indeed to be able to appreciate these as a viewer, demonstrates the refinement of meticulous viewing in visual culture. In Mughal terms, increasing miniaturisation of details was a mark of a more developed and accomplished art form. The ability to paint on a small scale and nest details within details was a highly regarded talent and the sign of a skilful artist, not only because of the dexterity and accuracy needed for the execution of minute movements but also for the remarkable eagle eye required in the painting and descrying of such tiny details. The smallest detail becomes a challenge between viewer and artist. The various legends about the Persian artist 'Abd-al Samad painting a polo scene on a grain of rice, or in the case of his son, Muhammad Sharif, painting a picture of an armed horseman on another grain of rice serve to indicate this important Mughal aesthetic value.[94] Some of the finer details in the painting of the disputing physicians, **Fig. 1.4** for example, is a tiny panel painting which appears in the background underneath another only relatively larger, of a man kneeling before an angel (possibly of St. Matthew and the Angel). This sub-panel is a mere few millimetres in size and has puzzled art historians who remain unsure as to which scene it refers. Note also, the chafing dish far to the left, with deer painted in its surface and the small fox carved onto the doorframe under the curtain in the background, and also the flower held in the swooning physician's right hand vying for attention with all the flowers woven into the carpet design. The painting is a vivid display of major shifts in scale and dimension; it is a deliberate game of spot the detail. It is almost as if the lucidity of detail and the richness of design create a different sense of reality, one might even call it hyper-reality. The sense of space represented by the panels in the background and the chafing dish, and the designs in designs on the rug, appear to fold up space within space, along the lines of a Russian nesting doll (*matryoshka*) a toy which playfully hints at infinite regress. In the painting, various distractions multiply, one might even say that this multiplicity of distractions are part of the richness of experience demanded by the painting and that the hierarchy implied by the figure ground relationship (and the conception

of space that is contingent upon it) is abandoned for a simultaneity of experiences, some of them appearing to pierce each other with sharp and significant focal points.

The ambiguity of space, the tension between background and foreground and the feeling of charged, vital and dramatic activity is part of the pleasure of the piece and not its failure.[95] Without the figure-ground relationship we see a flat design aesthetic based on linear and planar qualities that require shape recognition, methods of comparing outlines, appreciation of abstract design and the ability to see a painting both generally in its multiplicity yet also, bit by bit in its astounding detail. This interplay between general viewing and piecemeal inspection allows us to see on the one hand, the flatness of the painted surface and on the other hand, the fiction of background and foreground. Constantly shifting focus appears *de rigueur*. The *Padshah-nama* is full of principles of painting that the Post-Impressionists Emile Bernard, Gauguin and Matisse championed so much when they developed the dazzling interplay of background pattern and foreground detail, each of which appeared to have equal emphasis.[96] In **Fig. 1.6** the artist has minimised the illusion of space and volume for the aesthetic of the 'true', flat surface, composed of interlocking decorative areas that appear on the same plane, rather than being an illusionist succession of receding ones. The Post-Impressionists achieved this also by minimising *chiaroscuro,* and perspective and *sfumato*, as the Mughals did. [97]

The Post-Impressionists in Europe had carefully avoided illusionist traditions; and while the Mughal artists were certainly more pragmatic, there are examples showing that they were sometimes as deliberate about their own anti-illusionist devices. We have already discussed a painting in the *Padshah-nama,* where Shah Jahan pays homage to his father Jahangir and where there is a scale of anti-illusionism, increasing to relatively more illusionism in the foreground at the bottom of the page. This was probably done not only to play off each degree against another for contrast and comparison but also to signal an awareness of different painting styles.[98] The most obvious expression of this awareness of painting styles is the artist Govardhan's two facing pages in an album, one depicting Shah Jahan riding with Dara Shikoh his son, the other of the great conqueror Timur riding with an attendant, both painted around 1638.[99] The two paintings represent a deliberately sharp contrast of styles, the first seventeenth century in character, the second a pastiche of the hard linearity of Timurid period painting of centuries earlier. The artist here uses the theme of (relative) illusionism to articulate an encounter of different time periods but he is also contrasting illusionism with anti-illusionism and the fact that the Mughals regarded themselves as Timurids in India, a lineage that is amplified in the painting depicting both stylistic continuity and change. The double page tells of

cyclical myth, the return of Timur through his lineage, reappearing in the guise of Shah Jahan, the art of the past is instantiated in the art of the present.

As usual in the *Padshah-nama*, illusionism gives way to surface effect, which appears almost Egyptian in the static, distanced creations of the figures. Much of this depends on the attention given to the rich effects of textile designs juxtaposed with carpet designs which are never, by the way, shown with illusionist perspective. What commentators on the *Padshah-nama* have overlooked is the consistent use of fine lines surrounding all forms and the suppression of anatomical modeling and three-quarter views apart from infrequent examples. The combination of these essentially anti-illusionist artistic techniques, both in fine outlines and areas of flat textile design for an "other-worldly" effect are best known in Western art in the form of the Neo-Platonic painter, Botticelli who also brightened the countenances of his figures to defy naturalistic lighting. This anti-illusionist aesthetic implies that beauty is to be observed but not handled, or at least the invitation to do so is either largely absent, or, as in examples in literature, if present, are a sign of the viewer's mad intoxication by an enchanted image.

Space and Desire

In one of the most famous romances in Persian and Indian subcontinental literatures, the story of Khusrau and Shirin by the poet Nizami, illustrated several times by generations of Mughal artists, a recurrent theme is the danger of seduction by the image. Shirin falls in love with a portrait of Khusrau, which she kisses and embraces, and this is clearly associated with magic and is an extraordinary, indeed, unnatural response bordering on idolatry. This is expressed as the erosion of space between desiring subject and desired object. It is also at the same time, a closure of the conceptual space between sign (the painting) and the signified (the person the painting portrays). The act of touching the portrait is not a kind of seduction by the art of illusionism; it is not a way of trying to establish what is real by the confirmation of touch and it is only a temporary comfort to the bereaved. The touch, the kiss, the embrace are a condemnation, an outward sign of loss, an instantiation of the fetish, a form of capitulation, when the desiring subject realises the true nature of her loss and her inability to bring about the presence of her beloved and indeed outward acknowledges this loss by feeling the coldness of the inanimate object. In the poetry at least, it is a touch heavy with intent and with wish fulfillment, tainted with desire towards the inanimate object and a belief that one's own inner plea will somehow affect the physical universe. Such an embrace is doomed from the start with frustration, tinged with the refusal to accept reality or the will of God. While there are examples in Persian and Arabic literature of heroes and heroines

who fall in love with portraits (which are often embraced or kissed) this behaviour is never explained as a result of the image's invitation to the tactile senses but it is always a sign of the reversal of human fortunes.

In the Khusrau and Shirin story in particular, we deal with the picture as the temporary embodiment of the lover, underpinned with the mechanism of deferral of "the real" that results in the elision of portrait and sitter. This is also the desire for possession of and dominance over the lover's body, which can be realised *in abstentia*, through the image, turning erotic desire into auto-eroticism. This is, of course, a kind of proto-pornography but without the most obvious appeal to the body parts usually employed in the sexual act. The lover's desire expressed towards a pictorial image of the lover, illustrates the seduction of the visual senses and the capitulation of reason in the face of an uncontrollable lust for physical beauty. The enchanted viewer holds, touches the picture, Shirin presses Khusrau's portrait to her lips, and embraces it, this allows the picture to satisfy the yearning for touch and by extension both possession and domination. The lover loses identity in the throes of intoxication. Desire is even more shameful as it is directed towards an image as a substitute for the possession of the body, awareness of which is deferred by desire.[100] The lust for possessing the image of the object of desire is insatiable, for it is continually thwarted by the absence of the body yet continually aroused by the image's bringing of it to mind. This is part of the magic of the image.

Her confusion is also explained as a result of the mystical notion that it is possible to see oneself in the eyes of the lover. The portrait of Khusrau seduces Shirin, so that every time she put wine to her lips, in a vain hope to forget him she kissed the ground in front of the painting.[101] This clearly associates the seduction of a painting with idolatry. She embraces the portrait (desiring an embrace) and her handmaidens destroy the image in an attempt to break its spell. Similar powerful effects are exerted upon Iskandar (Alexander the Great) by a picture of Nushabeh. In a *Thousand and One Nights* Ibrahim, the son of the vizier of Egypt is almost driven mad by the picture of a beautiful woman. There are numerous examples of such behaviour towards images in European cultures.[102] In such contexts it is common that the picture is often shown to be the product of ritual magic and can therefore enchant the viewer, seducing him or her, causing them to fall in love. It also may act as a device to summon the presence of the absent one, or it is a curse, making the viewer fall in love with the image itself, much like the fate that befalls Narcissus.

The relationship between the image of absent sitter and the viewer of the image is one of reproductive imagination: for it to work the viewer uses fiction to re-describe reality, and the world. The internal image of the lover (what the lover cherishes) is brought to mind by the fiction of the image. It is not hard to see how this process of seduction by the image is used by the poet Nizami

interchangeably with a lapse in faith, returning to polytheism by way of idolatry, which is characterised as infidelity, either through acceptance of a substitute or idol for the "real" thing, or through auto-eroticism. It is interesting that the spark that leads to the fire is the touch.

The desire for contact with the art object, or indeed what it portrays is a key element in Berenson's art historical theories.[103] But where in Berenson's world this response indicates the success of visual art, a psychological drive to ascertain reality, much like the desire of St. Thomas to touch the wounds of Christ in Verrocchio's bronze sculpture, which relies heavily on this tactile desire for its visual force—as well as thematising it—it is an aberration in the Islamic context. Indeed, the transformation of retinal impressions into tactile values resulting in the actual physical response of the touch, is a sign in Islamic cultures of excess: the viewer has been tempted to respond physically with an act motivated by desire, the desire to possess, hold and dominate the body, an act of hubris, which tries to manipulate fate with false belief driven by a desire that abruptly brings to an end contemplation, imagination and self-control. This lack of self-control is characterised in some Islamic cultures as idolatry, whose mechanism may be:

> […] an image which has an unwarranted irrational power over somebody; it has become an object of worship, a repository of powers which someone has projected into it, but which in fact it does not possess.[104]

In this way, tactile values mark the boundary between two fundamentally different visual cognitive traditions. What is commonplace for Western illusionist painting in terms of *rilievo* modeling is extraordinary and irrational for the Mughal. This is not to say that erotic responses are entirely absent in Islamic art. But in Mughal art figural painting lacks that other, major pillar of European illusionism which is based on the tactile senses: the illusion of volume and modeling that invite us to touch. A painting of Prince Murad and his wife c. 1600, by Manohar, an artist quite capable of painting with some of the finest illusionist techniques, focuses more on the knotted pattern of interlocking arms and hands and the interplay of the prince's green pajamas with the red of his wife's tunic. The eroticism here is expressed with gesture, the interlocking of legs, interlaced rhythm, counter-rhythm and line, with rather flat, shadow-less forms, never with the suggestion of the volume, texture or the blemishes of living flesh. Erotic or amorous representations frequently appear as a pattern of knotted limbs. The tactile senses are denied in favour of the intellectual perception of line and formal relationships in order to suggest the rhythm, not the corporeality of desire.

Eroticism is a response brought about with different cognitive signs. Emotional or erotic responses produced by illusionism transform the image into

an object of desire in itself, doubling the notion of 'presence' while the diagrammatic kind of representation signals a kind of absence. The anti-illusionist image does allow for the formation of an internal visualisation (fleshed out with memory or extrapolation, for example). Academic illusionism relies on the viewer's powers of imagination in different ways. It is an integral part of the mechanism to rely on sexualising vision, almost routinely and to different degrees of intensity in intention and in reception. The reverse of this impulse is guilt or fear, utilised by illusionist representations of the sacred body of Christ, for example, where the invitation to touch becomes religious revelation, the point at which the space between the Holy Spirit and the flesh is eliminated[105] or where the flesh is made grotesque and shown to be realistically decomposing as in many paintings of Christ before or after the resurrection, in order to contradict and confound the tactile desire, to replace desire with pity through revulsion and guilt.

The difference between envisioning the body in the two traditions is also one of envisioning beauty in different ways. The illusionist vision brings to mind tactile corporeality within a sense of design, while the anti-illusionist depiction of the body brings to mind the idea of form and design without the illusion of three dimensions or texture. Even those bloody battle scenes in Persian and Mughal art which relish in the details of decapitated heads (in the *Padshah-nama* there is one which is rendered with callous but miraculous detail) succumb to a sense of bilateral symmetry or some other composition or sense of convention or decorum. Certainly, in European terms, one might also add a further distinction that a convincing kind of illusionism is an easy pleasure, while deliberate anti-illusionism is more an acquired taste in a world bombarded by hyper-reality. In spatial terms, Mughal painting is aloof and detached, with space around it and before it and between it and the viewer. The scission between the sign and the signified is part of the viewing process and this is a way to distance desire by creating a space between it and the viewer to transform the penetrating eye into the detached, stoic or 'ethical' eye. The illusionist tradition, however, represents a space that is intimate with the viewer's. Conceptual and physical spaces are contiguous with one another, and one is traced over the body of the other and viewed stereoscopically as identical. Here, picturing desire, arousing it, objectifying it, brings the viewer's space into the projection of pictorial space and in so doing, it seeks and often succeeds in eliminating the space between conceptual and physical space in the mind of the viewer. Instantaneous understanding of the painting's intention is a form of make-believe. The space between the sign and signified, which is a space of desiring is preserved in anti-illusionist art and eliminated in illusionism.[106]

What this chapter has tried to show is a wide range of Mughal aesthetic readings of visual material beyond the narrow limit that art historians have

hitherto considered them capable. Mughal responses to painting need not necessarily have consisted of simplistic appreciations of illusionism or literal interpretations of paintings but were coloured and conditioned by traditional and literary conceptions of images as pleasurable, powerful, magical, efficacious, metaphorical and abstract, as such Mughal paintings are images of thought. The history of Mughal art has overemphasised not only the illusionism of Mughal art but also misunderstood the Mughal appreciation of illusionism as a way of understanding the nature of knowledge and ethics. Some of the emphatic characteristics that lie present in Mughal painting underneath or through more or less superficial aspects of illusionism are different conceptions of the human figure, space and the function of art. Mughal painting does not attempt to project the viewer's space into pictorial space. It does not use illusionism to arouse the tactile senses and to create the desire to materialise form. Aesthetic response is not to be found solely in the perception of the appearance of objects and persons depicted in Mughal art but equally or perhaps more so, in the arrangement of space *between* objects depicted in painting. This finer substance is the object of study in Chapter Two.

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[1] I use this term to denote a tradition of painting which uses a system of signs to signify reality or the human body differently from those used in illusionism. This is in spite of certain reservations that have been voiced about the term. Nöel Carroll asserts that one of the reasons why anti-illusionism is untenable as a term is that its opposite, illusionism, is straw man: we are never really deceived by an image. Nöel Carroll, 'Anti-illusionism in modern and postmodern art' *Leonardo* 21 (1988): 297-304. However, most artists and historians understand illusionism simply as traditional mode of evoking sensations and lower-level perceptions about the visible world, a style of constructing and reading paintings that does not question how these perceptions take place (often with the use of tried and trusted illusionist techniques of *chiaroscuro*, perspective etc.) and in order to encourage an unthinking acceptance of the given, or of the story depicted. Anti-illusionism denotes a set of techniques which promote perceptions of flatness and other techniques in order (I use the Husserlian term) to "bracket out" such sensations, or at least to approach them in a differentiated way. Needless to say, the discursive practice between illusionism and anti-illusionism is found in many cultures in the world but this has gone unnoticed by most Euro-American commentators whose focus tends to reinforce notions of the supremacy of European and American illusionism *and* anti-illusionism.

[2] Derivative of a text called the *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, itself derived from the Sanskrit *Panchatantra*. The set of 52 fables which make the *Tuti-nama* were compiled by Ziya'ud din Nakshabi, a Persian writer, c.14th Century AD. See Pramod Chandra and Daniel J. Ehnbom, *The Cleveland Tuti-nama Manuscript and the Origins of Mughal Painting*.

[3] Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 17-18.

[4] For this approach, see Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Master Artists of the Mughal Court* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1991) where the book is divided into chapters, each dealing with a particular artist.

[5] I will usually refer to male artists, because they were overwhelmingly male, although there were a few exceptions to this rule: Shaf'ia Banu and Nini, and Raquiya Banu, see A. K. Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time*, 66.

[6] Used by Partha Mitter to denote the artist as a free soul and intellectual, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994), 12-15.

[7] See for example, the unthinking romanticism, not to mention the anachronistic assumptions of Stuart Cary Welch who comments, "Human beings, and particularly artists […] continued to find ways to express their inner freedom." S. C. Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, 29.

[8] "A whole mythology is deposited in our language" Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen Über frazers Golden Bough=remarks on Frazer's golden bough* (Harleston: Brynmill, 1995) 10. See also: "The post-modern artist is on the margins of things in such a way that it is not the artist who counts but rather the paintings and inscriptions themselves. And these texts and performances achieve their significance and value in their intertextual relations with other texts." H. J. Silverman, 'The philosophy of postmodernism', in H. J. Silverman, ed., *Postmodernism. Philosophy and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 1990), 3. That Persian artists were expected to be able to paint in different "styles" undermined the "operative condition of stylistic analysis. *viz.*, that the artist can only be himself by demonstrating that he could clearly be something other than himself and was capable of imitating and of reproducing the style of other artists." David Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth Century Iran*, *Muqarnas*, *Supplements* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 131.

[9] "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely." Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977), 146.

[10] "There never was or will be a self-present beholder [or artist] to whom a world is transparently evident. Instead there are more or less powerful arrangements of forces out of which the capacities of an observer or artist are possible." Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1992), 6.

[11] Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Master Artists of the Mughal Court* and A. Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters.*

[12]A comment referring to the Shah Jahan period *Padshah-nama* (completed 1646), Gauvin Bailey, 'The End of the "Catholic Era" in Mughal Painting' *Marg*, v. 53, no. 2 (December, 2001), 58 where the author also writes that Shah Jahan period painting did not require "great learning or initiation into the realms of court culture" to understand; and is "easily grasped by the masses". The masses would never have been invited to view such a manuscript. And in fact, its images may be seen to mediate a complex set of visual

responses, which the author has overlooked. The manuscript's visual aesthetic will be examined in detail in due course.

[13] A similar point has been made for the absence of written theories about Renaissance composition, namely, the so called 'paradigmatic order' of bilateral symmetry was "sanctioned by centuries of unquestioned usage in cult images, was probably seen not as a specific form of pictorial composition, but as part of the natural order of the Christian hierarchy." Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition, Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1440-1800* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 169.

[14] Ebba Koch, in her studies of Shah Jahan period painting (see, *Padshahnama,* 130-143) tends to focus on imperial imagery by only dealing with one visual, structural principle of hierarchy where many other compositional devices based on geometrical schema are evident. This will be discussed at length in due course, suffice it to say here, the discovery of other compositional principles and conventions at work in Shah Jahan period painting weakens the case that the compositional structure of this painting is primarily politically motivated to show power structures.

[15] See D. J. Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-din Bihzad and Authorship in Persianate Painting' *Muqarnas* 17, 2000, 119-146.

[16] A point made by Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image,* 124.

[17] John Seyller does a remarkable job identifying the hand of some artists in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau but *some* attributions are inevitably less conclusive than others. See John Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India,* pl. xxi; pl. xxiii, for example. pl. xix, attributed to Sanvala could as easily be Lala, whose Iskandar appears almost identical in the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami, see Barbara Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami* (London: British Library, 1993), fig. 43. And yet, Lala's Iskandar appears identical also to Sanvala's depiction of the same character on xviii, 80 of Amir Khusrau's *Khamsa*. This may be because artists coped each other's styles so that the appearance of such a major character as Iskandar is consistent in a manuscript cycle (cf. Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India,* pl. xviii, xix and xxiii), which has happened with the depiction of Khusrau and to a lesser extent Iskandar in the British Library *Khamsa*. One of the identifying features of Sanvala's work is the reuse of certain vegetal forms; see Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India,* 80. Lala however, has used the same forms in his painting reproduced on pl. V. It is probable that more paintings of the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi were the result of corporate work than hitherto believed. In this regard, Seyller's description for pl. xxv, a painting shared by the work of Miskina and Farrukh highlights how nuanced the game of attributions can be.

[18] John Seyller rightly insists that there is enough evidence to show that supervisors gave instructions to artists about what to subject to paint; we still remain ignorant as to how spatial arrangements or colour distribution appear to form long standing traditions. See Seyller, *Pearls from the Parrot of India,* 112-114. While it is true that wholesale copying of earlier visual traditions in Mughal art does not occur, gestures to the past were "subtle, generally taking the form of variations on a familiar language of themes and form." Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India,* 114. In addition to this the author writes, "Once the subjects were determined, the artists set about depicting them in familiar schemes." 115.

[19] For a detailed analysis of how Mughal artists mixed styles, shared motifs and worked in a cooperative manner see a case study of the British Library *Khamsa*, Gregory Minissale, *Painting Awareness: A Study into the Use of Exotic Cultural Traditions by the Artists of the Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami* (PHD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2000), Chapter 2.

[20] It is clear, for example, that the attribution to the artist Bhola of *Shah Jahan honouring Prince Aurangzeb at his wedding* by Milo Cleveland Beach in Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 45 is doubtful, the faces and general style are painted in a radically different way to those in the painting of *The weighing of Shah Jahan on his forty-second lunar birthday*, pls. 12-13. There is also the problem of folios 124A pl. 25, and 124B, pl.26, which are both said to be by Bulaqi even though they are stylistically very different from each other. Other important inscriptions adding to the known corpus of Bulaqi's works mentioned by Beach have been discussed and tell us also, that Bulaqi was used for the specific purpose of overpainting faces. See Gregory Minissale, 'Three New Inscriptions in the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami (British Library Or. 12,208)', *Oriental Art*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1 (1998), 61-64.

[21] This fact is also recognised in *quattrocento* Italy, "The public mind was not a blank tablet on which the painters' representations of a story or person could impress themselves; it was an active institution of interior visualisation with which every painter had to get along" M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 45.

[22]See for example, a statement referring to Jahangir period painting of animals and flowers: "This is natural history painting at its finest." J. M. Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), 98. See also, a reference to Mansur who was continually ordered to paint animals and flowers, that he had the "gaze of a scientist". S. C. Welch, *India Art and Culture, 1300-1900*, 215. Linda York Leach mentions Jahangir's interest in "natural science" 'Later Mughal Painting' in Basil Gray, *The Arts of India* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981).

[23] British Museum 1969.3-17.03. Presented by Mr and Mrs Anthony N. Sturt. Published in Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*,

[24] The sense of aesthetic order is also seen in a huge number of animal drawings a majority of which are in profile view and painted with strong anti-naturalistic outlines that emphasise the calligraphic line. See a painting of a wounded buck painted c. 1620 by Payag, its antlers perfectly rounded, as if drawn with a compass and symmetrical. Wheeler-Thackston, ed. *Jahangir-nama*, 119.

[25] Milo Cleveland Beach mentions that naturalism in Mughal painting has been overstressed but not because of elements of anti-illusionist painting but because he believes that many nature drawings are actually copies of older archetypes. Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 37. See also, a study of how animals were painted from earlier artists' works in Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, G. Minissale, *Painting Awareness*, 69-73.

[26] This is in agreement with Sheila S. Converse who wrote about the dependence of the floral decorative repertoire of the Mughals on the Iranian and, importantly, was one of the few scholars to have emphasised that the Mughal attitude to nature was not one that enjoyed it *per se* as it was in all its random glory, but only when tamed, clipped and ordered according to the intellect and in harmony with aesthetic preferences. S.

Converse, 'Selective realism and stylisation in Mughal miniatures' in Robert Skelton, et. al, *Facets of Indian Art, a Symposium held a the Victoria and Albert Museum, 26, 27,28 April and 1 May, 1982* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986), 132-138.

[27] This is predated by Babur's attitude to nature "Then in that charmless and disorderly Hind, plots of garden were laid out with order and symmetry, with suitable borders and parterres in every corner, and in every border roses and narcissus in perfect arrangement". *Babur-nama*, trans. A. S. Beveridge, London, 1922, vol. 11, 518-19.

[28] In the words of Rumi "What the sayer of praise is really praising is himself, by saying implicitly 'My eyes are clear.' '' Coleman Barks, trans. *The Essential Rumi* (London: Penguin, 1995), 65. Even in the much-celebrated portrait of the dying courtier Inayat Khan by Govardhan, usually considered an example of Mughal naturalism and observation is, in fact, a highly stylised representation that was worked up into a more decorous painting, which cannot free itself from aesthetic considerations such as the hard linearity and colour balances preferred by the Mughal artist. Jahangir's order that his artists paint the emaciated Inayat Khan is a demonstration of the Emperor's all-seeing power, and yet, one can also imagine that the activity of painting is used here as an apotropaic ritual, to demonstrate (perhaps even to the Emperor's himself) his lack of fear of disease and death (a contrast to the fact that even the word "death" and various euphemisms for it were expurgated in his presence. The painting does not re-affirm reality; it transforms it into an act of the Emperor's "seeing". A similar point is made by Percy Brown who considered that the Emperor's gaze intervened in the relationship between art and life, "Jahangir supplied the aesthetic fact—the artist's vision—while his court painters provided the physical fact—the externalisation of that vision—the two cooperating to produce the actual work of art" Brown, *Indian Painting Under the Mughals*, 74. He rightly also places much emphasis on Jahangir's aesthetic taste, and mentions that he was a formidable art collector, and that his strong awareness of painting traditions was important for guiding and producing the kind of art of his reign, to reduce all of this to a simple appreciation of nature is simply misleading. Brown, *Indian Painting Under the Mughals*, 77.

[29] Jahangir visited a fountain at Virnag above Pampur in 1605. His description of its natural beauty is never so impressive as when he speaks of his own orders to perfect it by building channels and gateways and planting new flowers. See Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 95. In his memoirs as strange palm tree was measured and surrounded by a terrace, Wheeler Thackston, trans. *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir*, 208.

[30] Wheeler Thackston, trans. *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir*, 208.

[31] Compare this to "In Venice, in the sixteenth century painting and nature are almost synonymous terms." Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37. If this can be said about a fifteenth century culture in the West, it must also be viewed as a possible way to understand a culture contemporary with it in the East, for there is no evidence that the Mughal attitude to nature was approached with the secular, pseudo-scientificity implied by the term 'natural history painting'.

[32] Wheeler-Thackston, ed., *Jahangirnama*, 360.

[33] This may be seen in the often quoted words of Akbar: "It appears to me as if a painter had a quite peculiar means of recognising God; for a painter in sketching anything that

has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the giver of life, and will then be increased in knowledge." *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1 115. This is undoubtedly an echo of al-Ghazali's conception of beauty and shows Akbar to have been well aware of it. See Gulru Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and Humanities, 1996), 193. Such an attitude to visibilia and art is remarkably similar to aspects of Christian theology exemplified by Bonaventure in his *Journey of the Mind Towards God*: "All created things of the sensible world lead the mind of the contemplator and wise man to eternal God […] They are the shades, the resonances, the pictures of that efficient, exemplifying, and ordering art; they are the tracks, simulacra, and spectacles; they are the divinely given signs set before us for the purpose of seeing God. They are examples, or rather exemplifications (*exemplaria vel potius exemplata*) set before our still unrefined and sense-oriented minds, so that by the sensible things which they see they might be transferred to the intelligible which they cannot see, as if by signs to the signified (*tamquam per sign ad signata*)." Quoted in David Freedberg, *The Power of Image: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 165. Residues of this attitude persist into the Renaissance period with Leonardo da Vinci: "The deity that invests the science of the painter functions in such a way that the mind of the painter is transformed into a copy of the divine mind since it operates freely in creating many kinds of animals, plants, fruits, landscapes, countrysides, ruins and awe-inspiring places." Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2002), 479.

[34] A good example is given by Sheila S. Converse when she describes how Jahangir was charmed by the beauty of Dal Lake; his immediate response was "that it should be re-ordered into a garden with a waterfall" in Skelton, *Facets of Indian Art*, 132. In other societies the artist is urged not to paint external phenomena (especially if purely illusionist) but his heart/mind; see C. Clunas, *Art in China: Oxford History of Art* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), 55. Also in Vasari we find that forms must rise above the mere imitation of nature if they are to rise to ideal beauty, beyond nature's peculiarities; this is an attitude that continues to oppose itself to illusionism and to the idea that nature is in any way superior to art. This is a recurrent theme in Western thought. In the philosophical system of Hegel, "Art does not slavishly imitate nature. On the contrary, it is just this pure externality and meaningless contingency of nature that it has to get rid of […] and if the function of art is not the imitation of nature, neither does it consist in moral instruction" W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 447.

[35] Jonathan Crary elaborates on this point in his treatment of Chardin's paintings where he claims that for the artist, objects in the imagined space of the painting were a fusion of recognised appearances with social meanings and at the same time an ideal structure founded on a deductive rational clarity. "For Chardin, sensory knowledge and rational knowledge are inseparable." Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century*, 63. What the artistry of such diverse kinds of painting as Van Gogh, Chardin and Mughal painting achieve is the transformation of the appearance

of everything into an abstract order and also the reverse is true: turning balance and design, and in some cases, geometrical plans in both colour structure, figural arrangement and line into elements of representation, figures, architecture, furniture, animals.

[36] Paul Ricoeur in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination: Reflection and Imagination* (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1991), 91.

[37] E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion; A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960).

[38] We have already seen, for example, the emphasis on naturalism, which was particularly marked in writers like E. Wellesz, *Akbar's Religious Thought Reflected in Mogul Painting*, where Akbar's interest in painting "depended on the painter's capacity to create the illusion of reality."(28). The writer also implies a slavish adoration for European art where the Emperor must have found "deep satisfaction in the superior naturalism of European art" (29). David Roxburgh writes about the art historians of Persian (and Indian) art Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray who similarly "privilege the Western form of image-referent relationship, a naturalism founded on mimetic principles considered to produce a closer equivalent of reality." D. J. Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate Painting' *Muqarnas* 17, 2000, 9. Appended to this view of faithfulness to nature is a moral view that sees any divergence from the truth of appearances, such as an interest in chromatic complexity for example, as moral laxity, or childish fantasy; this may be seen particularly in the works of John Ruskin, *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art and its Application to Decoration and Manufacture Delivered in 1858-9* (Orpington: George Allen, 1884). Here, he expounded the theory that it was a moral duty to study nature. This tradition may be seen clearly in the work of Mildred and W.G Archer, where a strong disapproval of disregarding naturalism in favour of the kind of palette that both Persian and Mughal art are famous for is expressed regarding the later Indian art of Oudh, where Indian painters had "violent recourse to mauves and purples, flaming reds, dark heavy greens […] it is as if a hot exotic quality—a touch of fevered brilliance—had infected the style on its arrival from Delhi earlier in the century and so exactly had this quality matched the corrupt luxuriance of the court." Mildred and W.G Archer, *India, Painting for the British* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 60.

[39] An example of this is the art of the Andes, under the aggressive cultural and religious imperialist designs of the Jesuits. Even today the work of Gauvin Bailey who has examined Jesuit missionary art in the Americas, China, India and Japan has been criticised for doing to Inca art (and perhaps by implication in the other areas of his work) what many art historians have done to Indian art generally, which is to look at these non-Western traditions through a "Western lens [to suggest] that indigenous peoples around the world adopted European style painting, not because they were coerced into doing so, but because they were enthralled with its representational qualities" and "considered Renaissance art techniques to be universal phenomena that went beyond cultural parameters." See Marie Timberlake, *The Painted Image and the Fabrication of Colonial Andean History: Jesuit and Andean Visions in Conflict in Matrimonio de Garcia de Loyola con Nusta Beatriz* (PhD diss., University of California, 2001), 17.

[40] This terminology deliberately suggests cross cultural *exchange* rather than representing this exchange as one of Western cultural imperialism, or its obverse, the pollution of Indian, Persian or Islamic purity by Western or European art forms and techniques. Both views are patronising, representing Indian and Persian artists as passive victims of an external, active and aggressive artistic force, as if Indian artists had no independent critical judgement to exercise of their own or had lost their innocence or purity in some way. The most offensive example of this view is Alexandre Papadopoulo who sees the synthesis of Indian and European art as "disastrous" and writes that they are "Two contrary aesthetics on a single surface, within the same microcosm [which] can never settle into a tolerable marriage but must forever quarrel and end by destroying each other." A. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art* (125). This is very much against the view that these foreign forms and tools were rarely adopted slavishly. Simple copies of European prints by Mughal artists were exercises in studying technique; they were not evidence that Mughal painting had thrown out highly sophisticated traditions of their own in favour of Christian imagery. On the contrary, the implementation and manipulation of European techniques and imagery, alongside Persian and Indian pictorial conventions marked a creative selection process, a careful integration of such forms into greater cultural expression, not cultural self-effacement. Indeed, to use the language of modern technology, the Mughal artists' showed ingenuity in "uploading" foreign elements into their own aesthetic and semantic structures.

[41] "[…] however much one wishes that delineating influences were a neutral exercise, in the context of colonialism, it becomes difficult to ascribe influences in a way that does not automatically presume the inferiority of the borrower" Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 4, 6.

[42]Mitter referring particularly to the work of W. G. Archer, *India and Modern Art* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959): "Had Archer made use of sources in the original languages, they would have given him an insight into the cultural climate in which these works were produced. Instead, volumes were limited to an external consideration: to what extent did these Indian artists emulate, successfully or unsuccessfully, their purported European models?" Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 4.

[43] This approach has precedents in the work of O. C. Gangoly and T. Ghosh who raised ornamental and non-mimetic art to a higher moral and intellectual plane. This was followed by a number of Indian artists who rejected mimetic art. See Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 354-356.

[44]The rational soul, the seat of visual and aesthetic perception could "descend downward to the ignoble corporeal world of the sense. It could also direct its longing gaze upward toward the resplendent beauty of the intelligible world, infused with brilliant light." G. Necipoglu paraphrasing Plotinian concepts, *Topkapi Scroll*, 187.

[45] Mawlana Nur al-Din `Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492).

[46] Marianne Shreve-Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage, Illustrations in a Sixteenth-Century Masterpiece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 41.

[47]European artists were said to paint so "that people may mistake a picture for reality" Abu'l Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 103. In the next passage he goes on to state that despite this, writing is superior to painting as it "may embody the wisdom of bygone ages." The

latter remark may have been introduced at this juncture as a specific foil to the praise showered on European painting in the previous line. Almost all of Abu'l Fazl's pronouncements on painting are laudatory.

[48] "The soul of Mani [i.e., the archetype of painting] is bewildered and stunned by its [the Dar al-Khilafat's] portraits and pictures" a description of pictures seen in the Dar al-Khilafat at Agra by Qandahari in his *Tarikh-i Akbari*, c. 1580-84, in M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, eds., *Fatehpur Sikri: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge Mass.: Aga Khan Program, Harvard University, 1985), 294.

[49] They are not emptied of their significance because of overuse but "embody a crucial stage in people's thinking about images and the way they respond to them […] The mystique of art is discovered by considering the commonplaces in which people speak about art and about all imagery; it is discovered by commonplaces and topoi because it is represented by them—and by metaphor and similes as well." Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 37- 46.

[50] In the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, British Library, Or. 12, 208.

[51]"A talisman is a magic image which is supposed to have the power to hinder people from approaching places near which it is put" C. E. Wilson, *The Haft Paikar (The Seven Beauties): Containing the Life and Adventures of King Bahram Gur, and the Seven Stories Told Him by his Seven Queens* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1924), 67. As a repellent force, the talisman may keep away good things as well as bad: "The reason is a soul, and thou art its body. Thy soul is a treasure and thou art its talisman. How can this treasure give thee light, until thou breakest the talisman at its door?" G. H. Darab, Trans., *Makhhzanol Asrar: The Treasury of Mysteries of Nezami of Ganjeh*, London, 1945, 230. In Firdausi's *Shah-nama*, there is the story of Caesar who creates a talisman, a life-like figure on a throne as a test for the Persian envoys who fail to see that that the figure is not real.

[52] See a painting of the story of the princess of the Sandalwood Pavilion: a prince falsely accused of incest exonerates himself with the aid of magic spells (one of which is to conjure up a demonic being with the aid of an idol). See also Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pl. xxviii and pl. xxix, the story of the princess of the White Pavilion: a talisman that laughs whenever it observes insincerity. The Mughals also saw fit to paint stories showing idols to be false, which not only reflects their immediate proximity to Hindu idols in the Indian subcontinental context, but also a way of questioning the illusion involved in images generally. See the painting of Sa'di's visit to an Indian temple, Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, pl. 185, and another version, Sa'di and the idol of Sumnath, Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selections from the Art and History Trust Collection* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), pl. 137r. In the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, the picture of the talisman in *The Qipchaq Women Veil Themselves* the magical, compulsive effect of images on human actions is a key element in the illustration of the story of the talisman and the Qipchaq women. On the Qipchaq plain, Iskandar is alarmed that the Qipchaq women do not wear veils and that this might lead his soldiers astray. The sage Apollonius comes to his rescue and carves a talisman of a veiled woman that will charm the Qipchaq women into *purdah.* See B. Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 51.

[53] "His majesty, from the time he came to an awareness of things, has taken a deep interest in painting […] consequently this magical art has gained in beauty" and furthermore: "his majesty himself indicated the scenes to be painted". H. Blochmann, Trans., *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. I, 107. Two other times in the same chapter of the *A'in-i Akbari*, Abu'l Fazl uses the term, "magic making" to refer to artists and painting. See Pramod Chandra, *The Tuti-name of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 182-84.
[54] Quoted in J. C. Bürgel. *The Feather of Simurgh*, 60.
[55] See Lot 85, Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures* (London, 18 October, 1995), 74.
[56] Father Anthony Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J.* Trans. By J. S. Hoyland and annotated by S. N. Banerjee (London, Oxford University Press, 1922) 9.
[57] Hoyland and Bannerjee, trs. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate*, 176.
[58] Ibid.
[59] The incident may have taken its lead from an old European tradition. A portrait could substitute for a missing individual in Renaissance Italy, where for example, in 1518 at the wedding of the Lorenzo di Piero de'Medici, Duke of Urbino to Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, a portrait of the Pope Leo X with the cardinals Giulio de Medici and Luigi de Rossi, by Raphael (c.1517) was put in their place in their absence at the banquet table. Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance art.*
[60] Certainly in later years, Sir Thomas Roe the English ambassador to the Mughal court observed that the *jharoka* display "hath soe much affinitye with a Theatre—the manner of the king in his gallery; the great men lifted on a stage as actors; the vulgar below gazing on." Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 30.
[61]This is made explicit with Abu'l Fazl's description of the birth of Akbar's lineage through Alanquva, the Chingizid ancestor who like the Virgin Mary had an Immaculate Conception, see the *Akbar-nama*, (Bib. Indica), Trans. H. Beveridge, vol. I, 179-80.
[62] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1983), 38.
[63] "The paradigm of all order and disposition, the distribution and arrangement of the world by God, was accessible to the artist not in an arrangement of figures and forms on a *tavola* or a wall, or in a fragmentary section of space or world, but in the composition of the human body." Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 98.
[64] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 11-12.
[65]Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), 136-137.
[66] Priscilla Soucek 'The theory and practice of portraiture in the Persian tradition' *Muqarnas*, 17, 102, where among other key Islamic figures, she points to al-Ghazali saying "what a difference there is between someone who loves a painting on the wall because of the beauty of its external appearance and someone who loves one of the prophets because of the beauty of his invisible qualities." In the same way, the text around a full life-size portrait of Jahangir describes the emperor repudiating the portrait's power somewhat by claiming that ''virtue becomes a king more than his appearance.'' The painting on cotton measures 210.5 x 143 cms. See Lot 85, Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, (London, 18 October, 1995).

[67] There can be no doubt that Western art (apart from the art of the Middle Ages) is based on the body (also known as the nude) as the key for other viewing functions as well: "Both for perspective and composition, the human body is the 'unit' of order, the measure of all things. This is not a vague generalisation: Alberti's chequerboard floor consists of squares of 1 braccia, i.e. one-third the size of a human figure. One cannot over-emphasise the importance of the human body as the paradigm of order and composition in classical theory, of which Alberti was well aware." Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 59.

[68] Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 136-137. This tradition of proportioning, which has more in common with pre-Renaissance Western art and Mughal painting is characterised by Panofsky as something "intended to give insight into a vast harmony that unifies all parts of the cosmos by numerical and musical correspondences" and is a tradition which continues with the idealistic and schematical structuring principles in the literatures of such writers as Nizami and Nasiruddin al-Tusi, who were studied and revered by the intellectuals of the Mughal court.

[69] "In perceiving the pictorial world we find ourselves within its extended context, and we, as viewers cannot change our place within that context." Puttfarken, *Theories of Composition*, 76.

[70] Such a distinction also has been made between the relatively anti-illusionist art of illuminated manuscripts appealing to the mind's eye or imagination, and the character of frescoes, engaging more directly with the process of observation. See John Nash, 'A matter of mirroring.' Review of Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Decoding*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 November 1983, 12.

[71] Puttfarken has pointed out that the large-scale illusionist tradition of painting in the West and its attention to achieving the illusion of the presence of the human body can obscure consciousness of pictorial composition. On a small scale, with drawings, for example, the aim is "to replace a direct relationship with the viewer by internal relationships in the picture" Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition* 165. And conversely on a large scale, "it requires a deliberate act of will to divert our attention from the figures to the formal compositional harmonies and to the precise perspectival arrangement in the picture." 167.

[72] Julius S. Held and Donald Posner, *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Art, Baroque Painting, Sculpture and Architecture* (New York, Prentice Hall/Abrams, n. d), 85.

[73] See for example, "The tendency to be naturalistic dominates Akbari works and is the basis for the achievements of Jahangir's artists who were increasingly able to convey the fleshy solidity of the human body. Their inspiration for this was European" Linda York Leach 'Later Mughal Painting' in Basil Gray, *The Arts of India*, 142.

[74] See for example, a *Man of Sorrows*, possibly as late as 1700, a copy of a European painting, still rather harshly linear, in Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 25.

[75] I am thinking of one of the most impressive depictions of the human anatomy in the European style and this is Madhu's painting of a farmer at a well in the background of Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, Shapur Before Shirin, f. 45b, the stunning illusionism of which may only be discerned with a magnifying glass, on a scale too small for reproduction.

[76] To return to Soucek and her references to the writings of al-Ghazali, she suggests that Persian and Mughal portraiture expresses an "inner reality", which may have been known to the Mughals through al-Ghazali and called by him, *"al-basira al-batina"* or inner perception, which describes vision beyond merely external appearances (*zahir*)." Furthermore, "Only the weak focus exclusively on external appearances because the essential beauty of man's creations such as poetry, painting (*al-naqsh*) and architecture reflect the inner qualities of the poet, painter (*al-naqqash*) and builder." Soucek, *Muqarnas*, 102. Several other inferences of this kind have been made and are listed in Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 193. Many of the portraits of the Mughal emperors achieve a distancing effect by emphasising profile views and avoid emphasis on corporeal volume and mass. This is a point made by Gülru Necipoglu in "The serial portraits of Ottoman Sultans in comparative perspective' in Selmin Kangal, ed., *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman* (Istanbul: Isbank, 2000), 56-57.

[77]Described in another way by Oleg Grabar, as when the reader contemplates the image in a book and is no longer aware of even holding the book. O. Grabar, "Towards an Aesthetic of Persian Painting" in *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. S. C. Scott, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 139. Similarly in small scale works of art in European traditions "it must be true that for the tiny figures in drawing and oil sketches the real presence of the viewer in front of the work is clearly irrelevant" Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 153.

[78] Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 47

[79] While there are some large wall paintings that have survived from the Mughal period, the numerical frequency of this kind of painting compared to Mughal book paintings is tiny. For a discussion of some of the better known examples see Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 2001.

[80] From being mere background, decorative elements of gold ink, margin designs acquire more colour from the 1590s. The earliest example of a picture in the margin in colour, as opposed to gold inks is in the *Khamsa* of Nizami, 1593-95, f. 165b where a hunter, hidden behind a bush, aims his matchlock at some deer. Such a change denotes a shift in visual cognition from a peripheral page diagram designed to enhance the reading environment and gently signalling self-containment, to one that even challenges it, or at least lies alongside it with added presence. By the Shah Jahan period pictorial margin designs occupy an ambiguous status in regard to the main image, appearing often to be in silent communion with it.

[81] One of the best examples of this in Western art is Caravaggio's panels for the Contarelli Chapel that portray dark environments that have the illusion of being 'contiguous' with the darkness (and light) of the chapel itself. The dramatic light sources of both left and right hand panel suggest that light emanates from the central panel.

[82] Implied by John Seyller who suggests that on several occasions calligraphy is written diagonally, or squeezed in, if necessary, before an illustration so that the text, which the painting may illustrate, occurs before it or is included on the actual painting itself rather than coming after it. See J. Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 96.

[83] A more extreme but similar form of representation and perception is involved in the tradition of prints encouraged by the Jesuits, especially by Jerome Nadal (1507-80). These prints feature scenes and objects that are labelled with letters primarily for

mnemonic purposes to facilitate the learning of or meditation upon Christian doctrinal principles such as those connected to the Passion, for example. But the prints were also used as a way to divide up the text and provide access points to it (like chapter headings) and to provide access to the text in the reader's memory. Such a function of book illustration is a fairly natural, human cognitive development most probably also at work in Mughal culture. Although text blocks often seem to have abruptly isolated contents in Mughal painting that Mughal images were covered with text blocks could have on occasion been more easily memorised with the aid of the representational forms surrounding them.

[84] In c.350 BC, Aristotle proclaimed, in opposition to Leucippus, the dictum *horror vacui* or "nature abhors a vacuum."Aristotle reasoned that in a complete vacuum, infinite speed would be possible because motion would encounter no resistance. Since he did not accept the possibility of infinite speed, he decided that a vacuum was equally impossible.

[85] It was used by Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 187 and many times subsequently.

[86] Helen Gardner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 8th ed. Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey, eds. (New York; London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 299.

[87] For a discussion of this, see Cynthia Maris Dantzic, *Design Dimensions. An Introduction to the Visual Surface* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990).
See also Gregory Minissale, 'An Introduction to representations of the *horror vacui*' *Drain. A Journal of Contemporary Art and Culture* 08, 2008.
Hhttp://www.drainmag.com/H index_horror.htm Accessed, 12/12/2008.

[88] "The impression that these paintings [the Jaipur *Razm-nama*] make as a whole is first of teeming richness, sometimes overloading the composition with figures, a criticism which can also be made of some of the *Hamza* series" Basil Gray, 'Painting' in Sir Leigh Ashton, ed., *The Art of India and Pakistan: A Commemorative Catalogue of the Exhibition Held at the Royal academy of Arts London, 1947-1948* (London: Faber, 1950), 94-95. More recently, Linda York Leach writes about the lack of a sense of spatial relationships caused by the way objects crowd each other in this space in a painting in the Chester Beatty Library, L. Y. Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 22

[89] "The paintings of [Jahangirs's] reign are elegant, yet simple in contrast to those of the next generation [Shah Jahan period] which are often weakened by excess detail of costumes or architecture paralleling the materialism that burdened the court" Linda York Leach, *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art*, p. 32; see also: "If lavish display was callously extravagant, it also served practical political purposes because it made the dynasty appear unassailable." 34.

[90] L. Y. Leach, *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 64.

[91] "Shah Jahan was a traditionalist who loved order both in the political realm and in art. In contrast to the spontaneously energetic decoration of the Akbar and Jahangir reigns, his artists returned to classical types of Islamic geometric arrangement. Although the cool structural precision of such designs masked by their soft natural details is very beautiful one can sense its underlying rigidity and brittleness […] a dreamlike perfectionism that symbolises his [Shah Jahan's] reaction against Akbar's desire for Hindu-Muslim coalescence. The always pushing, multiplying, purely organic vegetal

decoration of Hindu monuments intimates a different manner of perceiving the universe that eventually could not be reconciled with Islamic geometric and abstract concepts of order." L. Y. Leach, *Catalogue of Indian Miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 104.

[92] Only Papadopoulo seems to understand the relationship of colour placement to visual order in Persian art. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 104. Yet one is also reminded of a few remarks by Wassily Kandinsky who describes Persian art, as well as other kinds of art as having a "Complex rhythmic composition, with a strong flavour of the symphonic." W. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover, 1977), 34.

[93] I use the term 'miniature' only as a general term, or euphemism, when in fact, it is inaccurate. To the Mughals, their book paintings were not miniature at all, in fact, just about the right size. I would like to thank Eleanor Sims for making this important distinction.

[94]One assumes a certain amount of exaggeration, but one cannot be certain. Cf. S. Verma, *Mughal Painters and their Work: A Bibliographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (Delhi, 1994), 41 and 43

[95] As implied by one art historian who declared that the details are so vivid in this painting that they detract from the main narrative. Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 103.

[96] This principle must have been realised by Matisse in his study of Islamic art, and in his painting which articulates it: see for example, the extremely complex interplay of densely patterned planes in his *Still Life with Aubergines*, 1911. This interplay allows for the kind of ambiguities and levels of reality that are only really seen in Islamic manuscript painting previously and the artist was known to have been heavily influenced by this aesthetic in Morocco from where an enduring taste for Islamic art was fostered. Both Matisse's work and the Islamic aesthetic on which it is undoubtedly based, approximate the visual effect of painterly collage. The work of Matisse and the Islamic visual effect of patterned planes are "painterly" approximations of what was later to develop into collage, a more widely understood technique and visual appearance but one based on very similar principles of deconstructing illusionist space for an interplay of planar relationships. Both this Islamic tradition and Matisse's dialogue with it were, in effect, superseded by Picasso's actual, physical collage of 1912, *Still life with Chair Caning*. In a sense, Picasso indirectly changed the "painterliness" of the Islamic miniature collage exemplified in Matisse's work into physically discrete planes in the form of cut papers or print glued together on the surface of the painting; this was a logical extrapolation from the tendency found in Matisse's work and in the work of Persian and Mughal art.

[97] Ebba Koch suggests that the interplay of greater and lesser degrees of illusionism is attributable to social rank (lower orders being painted with more illusionism and therefore possessing negative connotations). Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 199. This at least supports the idea that illusionist techniques were used in a semantic system that differs from the illusionism of European art.

[98] In Edouard Manet's *Le Dejeuner dans l'atelier*, 1868 (and in his *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863) the artist, under the pretext of executing atmospheric perspective (blurring forms in the background) has used three different painting styles, contrasting levels of

finish. Loose, visible brushstrokes lie side-by-side with a more precisely delineated and finished areas. Although the logic of atmospheric perspective explains this contrast, it is obvious Manet uses it as an excuse to pursue his interest in the unusual optical effects of the new "unfinished style" he was pursuing which was taken so seriously by the Impressionists, contrasting it with the conventional academy style of Ingres, where everything is relatively overworked. With Vuillard, this is more explicit, where his *The Suitor*, 1893 is an elaborate encounter of two painting styles, one *pointilliste*, and the other full blocks of colour anticipating the Fauves. Similarly, our Mughal artist is signalling the historical transition and contrast of painting styles, of two different eras; simple mimesis nowhere present here.

[99] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, figs. 220, 221.

[100] Magic is the "self-deceptive element involved in the attempt to 'possess' the object of desire in spite of its absence" Ricoeur in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 122.

[101] Peter Chelkowski, *Mirror of the Invisible World. Tales from the "Khamseh" of Nizami* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 64, line 7.

[102] In Shakespeare's *Gentlemen of Verona* Proteus pleads "Vouchsafe yet your picture for my love […] to that I'll speak, to that I'll sigh and weep;" (Act 4, scene 2, lines 117-119). Julia's response is very telling: "I am very loth to be your idol, sir".

[103] See B. Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance* (New York and London, 1896).

[104] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London, 1986), quoted in David Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 376.

[105] The complex relationship between the concept of the incarnation and illusionism is dealt with by Freedberg, *The Power of Im*ages, 403. Christ is the *vera ikon*, or, the image of the father, made incarnate as man. This explains why images have formed such an important point in the iconoclastic debate.

[106] David Freedberg, who contrasts illusionist painting with diagrammatic and annotated prints by Jerome Nadal, reaches a similar conclusion. He states that much suspicion of visual imagery from early Christian reservations to Protestant critiques (which resemble many Islamic reservations about painting) is based on the seduction of illusionist devices: "A danger lurks in this yoking of imagination and sense perception. Real images may attract and guide the imagination more immediately and effectively than mental ones; but if it is their formal qualities that serve as the means of attraction, what guarantee is there that imagination will not remain with the pleasures of sense, and tarry at that easy juncture? What if the lingering is occasioned by color, line and pleasure in anatomy? It is only when we align ourselves with those who feel or express reservations of this kind that the full import of the systems of annotated illustration […] becomes apparent. The letters on the pictures not only draw attention to that which otherwise might escape us, they insistently draw the mind away from the attractive sign to the meaningful signified." Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 187-188.

CHAPTER TWO

READING PICTORIAL ORDER

Chapter Two presents new research into the history of Mughal and Persian art: the existence of a systematic pictorial order. There are three main aspects to this: the ordering of pictorial space with geometrical relationships; the procedure of measuring the distance and relationships between figures and objects depicted in the paintings, and the use of chromatic balances and counterpoints. These three systems of order often interact and cooperate to enhance an intricate involvement with the representation. Traditional approaches to Persian and Mughal art stress their character as representations of the visible world rather than the formal characteristics used to structure this representation. Mughal art utilises a tradition of abstract and geometrical pictorial order that defines its appearance just as importantly as the world it purports to depict. Rather than looking at Mughal painting as a deficient form of illusionism or naturalism, it is important to analyse how Mughal artists followed a system of pictorial order evolved from a close relation with Persian prototypes, and in a tradition of concerns different from those of Western art. The erasure of this system in Mughal art history in favour of the study of the surface effects of illusionism is a process of reductionism of Indian painting that also demotes isolated motifs with possible semantic dimensions to the level of meaningless decorative embellishment. To avoid the pitfalls of this kind of oversimplification it is necessary to look beyond the descriptive values of postcolonial art history, as it has been attempted in other non-Western contexts.[1]

Geometry and Pictorial Order

The formats and pictorial conventions of painting, especially those that are geometrically arranged, help to structure concepts of order and appropriateness. These conventions are more consistent and widespread in Mughal and Persian art than hitherto believed, and this is probably because the overstated naturalism of Mughal miniatures has eclipsed all other considerations of what we are looking at when we view this art. Yet, some scholars have made observations about the underlying geometrical principles of Persian art in the past.[2] And in regard to Mughal art, Gülru Necipoglu writes: “despite its increasing naturalism the Mughal visual idiom was still bound to a conventional modal system of

aesthetics."[3] And while this is indeed a valid statement to make about Mughal art, the point, however, is to demonstrate it. This system of pictorial order with geometrical compositions has never been documented or indeed, examined in any detailed way. This may be because the examination of the formal, geometrically identifiable structures of paintings is a form of scholarship that has become obscured by time.[4] By using a wider range of art historical approaches to identify pictorial order art historians can become more aware of these compositional structures in Mughal paintings.[5]

Geometrical spatial and figural organisation is fixed by *tarh*: the design or study for organising pictorial space usually a brush drawing, void of colour and illusionist volume. The preference for identifying Western illusionism and other influences deflects focus from these structures underlying the final appearance of the paintings. The composition of a picture in Mughal Indian art begins with *tarh.* A commentary by the Mughal prince Muhammad Haydar Dughlat (1500-1551), a cousin of the Emperor Babur used the word "*tarh*" frequently. Eric Schroeder translated it as a "diagram intention; and 'program' […] It was first laid down in 'skeleton form' according to the artist's *uslub*, style or method in the case of mechanical efficiency."[6] A closer analysis of the processes associated with *tarh*, however, reveal that most European definitions carry with them the assumption that the *tarh* is somehow deficient compared to the finished painting and that the *tarh* is some form of incomplete conception rather than the complex abstract configuration of the artist, followed by the other painting processes such as colouring, which, in Mughal terms are not so highly regarded. The main lesson to draw from this excursus into *tarh* is that it was treated as the superior aspect of image-making, reserved for senior artists, and valued highly, much like the art of calligraphy which similarly placed emphasis on proportion, line, and the relationship of parts to the whole in an overall pattern. *Tarh* was clearly related to the arrangement or grouping of figures and it was at this stage that proportional or modular relationships were also worked out. This is undoubtedly because *tarh* is related to the art of writing in terms of proportion, unity, geometric precision, and visual beauty, as opposed to merely colouristic charms, which are, nevertheless an integral part of a painting's aesthetics. Perhaps it would be more accurate if we were to regard *tarh* as a process that shares some properties associated with the Italian *disegno*, which:

> […] is an activity of the intellect acquiring knowledge of the general or universal kind from past accumulated experience of individual particular objects. *Disegno* therefore equals form in its philosophical sense or idea. On a second level *disegno* is then defined as the actual drawing with which our hand expresses the first *disegno*, the *giudizio* or idea. In practical terms, Vasari says that the artist must acquire, through continuous study and drawing of particular objects […]

> knowledge of the general form or idea […] so that he no longer has to rely upon the presence of a particular, and therefore deficient, object in nature.[7]

Such a relationship between *disegno* and the "philosophical sense or idea" expressed as a geometrical concept or form may also be considered for *tarh* and the idea in Persian art.[8] So we are dealing here not only with the outlines of forms and shapes and figures but the very conceptualisation of placement is involved in the process of working out the *tarh* and part of this visual ordering must have been closely associated with working out geometrical relationships which are very much evidence in Mughal painting.

In the art of Italian *quattrocento* painting, Michael Baxandall has made us aware of various processes of communication between artist and viewer, some of which may rely upon a shared cognition of geometric shapes and arrangements, beyond the surface of illusionist technique.[9] Although describing a different artistic tradition, these ways of conceptualising the visual language of painting can be applied to a non-Western context such as the Mughal Indian with varying success. Baxandall identified a process of viewing Italian *quattrocento* pictures that involved an implicit and deeply rooted knowledge of geometry; this geometrical knowledge is only part of a more complex "cognitive style." Also relevant for Mughal painting was his identification of the geometric compositional designs inherent in *quattrocento* painting, identifications that can also sensitise us to the underlying geometrical organisation of many Mughal paintings. The existence of these forms in Mughal art must also help us to conclude that geometry formed an implicit shared language between viewer and artist in the Mughal context, as it did in the Italian.

While Baxandall's approach is not ideally suited to an examination of Mughal art, mainly because his characterisation of the implicit language of geometrical knowledge shared by artist and viewer presupposes a different kind of artist and a different kind of viewer, there are indeed interpretations of Italian *quattrocento* art that may be fruitfully applied to the Mughal context. He identifies a commercial businessman as a viewer of art, this is not probable in the Mughal context as it is assumed that the imperial patrons were viewers of the art of the illustrated book (as well as a large number of artists in the imperial studios), but an interesting and valid parallel is provided where Baxandall writes of the tendency to reduce visual forms to their nearest geometrical ideal in the process of viewing a picture.

> To the commercial man almost anything was reducible to geometrical figures underlying any surface irregularities – the pile of grain reduced to a cone, the barrel to a cylinder […] This habit of analysis is very close to the painter's analysis of appearances.[10]

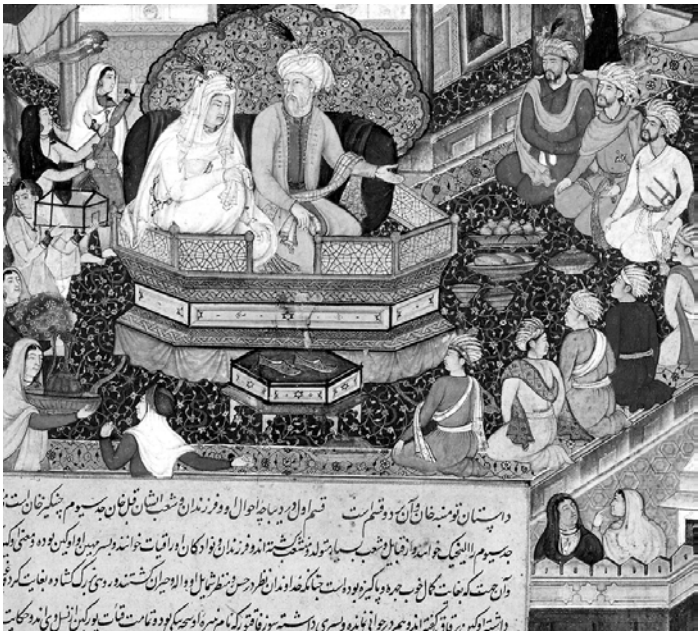
The ability to see pictorial space organised geometrically is complemented by this process of reducing natural forms to abstract geometrical shapes. This has been noted for architecture and the planning of towns in Mughal culture, which tended to lay a "new geometric order upon the Empire" and "to reduce all constructed reality to geometric formula."[11] Persian poetry favoured at the Mughal court frequently describes visual details in ways that alert us to this visual cognitive style. Describing the geometric organisation of a courtyard in the Jami' Masjid at Fatehpur Sikri, Muhammad 'Arif Qandahari writes that it "provides refreshment and shelter in the arcade of that vault, like the face of a bride with arch-like eyebrows."[12] This is a customary way to describe arches in literature but its reuse still indicates on the one hand, the visual perception of an architectural detail using anthropomorphic references and on the other, it implies that a woman's features can be compared to a geometrical abstraction, the rounded arches in an arcade. With several other well-known poetic devices, the beloved's face is compared to the circle of the moon, a boat as the semi-circle of a crescent moon (pairs of which are the closed eyes of the beloved).[13] Although these are poetic metaphors, they are based on the premise of an optical perception of the human anatomy and their resemblance to architectural or astronomical imagery that share geometrical features. This is only possible because the mind reduces both sets of objects that are being compared to their ideal geometrical form (a circle, a semi-circle). This is not to say that every Mughal was a poet or a mathematician or that every moment or painting was viewed in the same cognitive manner. Yet because so many cultural objects of Mughal society are the products of geometrical and mathematical calculation it is logical to assume a predisposition for geometrical abstraction or reduction of sense particulars in both the making and viewing of pictures, not only with individual objects depicted in pictorial space, but also with the relationships that the placements of these objects suggest in this space. In the following pictorial analyses, I will demonstrate how easy it is to view Mughal painting with this presumed predisposition and phenomenology.

Whether this pictorial order was overlooked by the viewer or not, its presence and transmission over various manuscripts and traditions cannot be denied and certainly suggests that artists looked for it, copied, and elaborated it for their patrons' delectation. Depending on the experiential base from which the viewer draws his or her viewing behaviour it may often be the case that in the reading of the story the viewer is unaware of how this narrative is conveyed and this level of involvement often goes hand-in-hand with the suspension of disbelief. However, to the self-aware viewer of images, usually artists themselves, art historians and some discerning patrons, the ordering principle in a composition is not invisible. Indeed, it can sometimes function as another element in the semiotic structure of the image: it can in some circumstances

convey meaning, apart from the narrative that it intends to order. This may be seen clearly if one imagines that a triangle, hexagon, circle, a spiral, or a solar array of radial lines emanating from a designated centre are compositional schemata or *tarh*, which not only order the elements of a painting in relationship to each other but also partake of a symbolic order of associated values and meanings that such shapes suggest in tradition. In this way, the *tarh* overwrites the nominal narrative illustration[14] and is *in excess* of the text and may be conveyed to the viewer intuitively and visually or by appealing to a rich tradition of geometric or solar symbolism such as that enjoyed by the Mughals.[15]

In Persian and Mughal Indian art, as well as in many examples of Early Renaissance art, the organisation of figures into meaningful relationships that may be read by the beholder is one of the main preoccupations of the artist. In Italian *quattrocento* painting Baxandall suggests how figures relate to each other in patterns that can be "richly evocative of an intellectual or emotional relationship" citing the geometrically arranged formations of a dance as a way to decode some of these pictorial relationships. In Mughal and Persian art, these relationships are based on court etiquette and the etiquette of encounters in formal situations but most often, these relationships, signaled usually by the arrangement of faces and bodies in the pictorial space, refer to geometric patterns.[16] In addition to this, it must be remembered also that many of the visible geometrical principles that order pictorial space in Mughal art occur as a network of references which link various paintings from several different periods together. This also happens in European art.[17]

A harmonious sense of order and perfection may be achieved not only by proportion but also by the grouping of figures, objects and animals along "visual rays" or orthogonals which have been identified for Western art as: "formalised sightlines along which we see the objects of the (pictorial) world, but which are not themselves objects of our seeing."[18] The relationship between figures and colours may provide points on a path along which our eye will travel, and certain paths can evoke particular sensations, perceptions or simply lead the eye to diverse areas in the depicted space. Mughal paintings showing the use of figures organised along "formalised sightlines" are plentiful. These suggest geometrical patterns to the reader/viewer and these are undoubtedly decided upon at the *tarh* stages of the work. Motivations for this ordering process (putting pictorial elements into a pattern) may spring from a desire to be aesthetically attractive, and to be neat and true to established idioms. In both European and Mughal painting traditions, the creation of an underlying design may be an attempt to make diverse pictorial elements in space relate to each other to signify a narrative, to appear unified. Whether this unity is achieved by artistic innovation or by the blueprints provided by tradition is a moot point.



2.1. *Chingiz Khan and his sons*

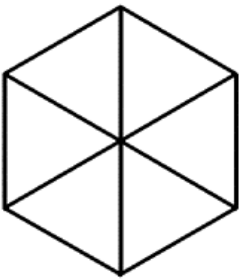
Although Mughal painting works closely with traditional organisational principles, as we shall see, it also provides numerous examples of elaborations of these. But it is important to recognise that one of the essential elements of *tarh* is its 'intertextual' character: figural arrangements in pictures, whether predominantly geometrically reducible or not, are based on or are adapted from the *tarh* used in other pictures. Thus *tarh* may also been seen as a visual notation acting as a mnemonic for narrative intricacies. Semantic and purely formal reasons are perfectly valid explanations for this visible pictorial order and should not be seen as contradicting each other.

A Case Study: The Hexagon and Hexagram

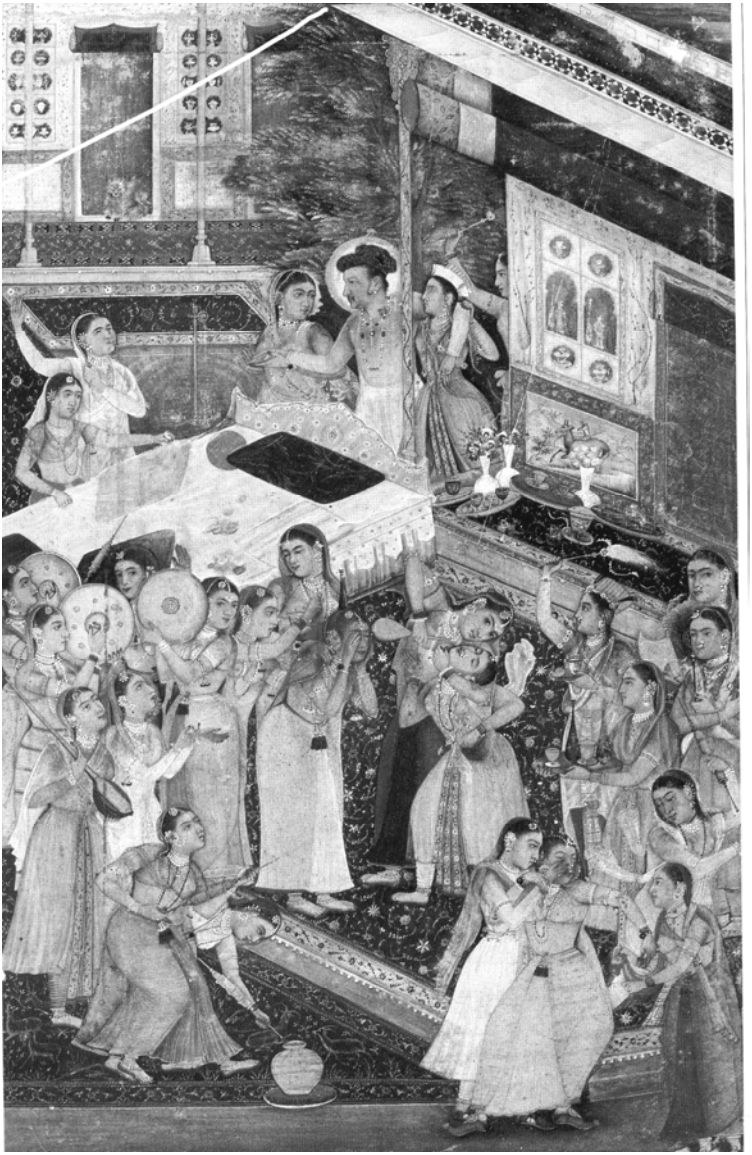
The hexagon appears in Mughal art as a compositional device inherited from Persian painting. The hexagonal form of composition is repeatedly used in the Tehran *Chingiz Khan-nama* or history of the Mongols, for example. Dominated by a hexagonal pattern is a painting of Chingiz Khan and his sons, **Fig. 2.1** which echoes the hexagon several times. The figural arrangement is the formulaic one adopted for formal meetings.[19] Chingiz Khan the conqueror is

shown dividing up the world for his sons to share. We see that the artist has used a hexagonal shape for the throne and footrest and continues with the arrangement of figures surrounding the throne; both male and female are complemented by the hexagrams on the door on the right. A curious figure on the left appears to peer out of the picture space to meet the eye of the viewer. She holds up a model of a house that appears to epitomise the sense of measured proportions, geometry, and architecture of the whole painting. This is highly appropriate for a painting that is about dividing up the world and the power of Chingiz Khan, revered conqueror and antecedent of the Mughal dynasty.

Although there exists no written text that may be used as evidence to explain the use of geometric forms such as the hexagon, a pattern emerges from the confluence of subject matter and the use of hexagonal compositions that may be explained by some of the possible semantic connotations that the hexagonal form appears to possess. It is important to keep in mind a general point, however, well stated by other authors that Islamic geometry is a "multi-layered contextual sign system" rather than a "rigidly codified iconographic one."[20] Primarily, it is a device appropriated by the Mughal emperors and used as a compositional favorite in court scenes and formal meetings in some dynastic portraiture, yet also used in religious contexts. Although at first glance these appear to be widely diverse contexts, the hexagon is a form that synthesises both worldly power and spiritual wisdom in a single image of thought.



In Islamic intellectual traditions, the hexagon is also known as the first 'complete' shape (as the creation also was completed in six days) signifying the concept of corporeal volume, an appropriate anti-illusionist and conceptual way of depicting three-dimensional space in Persian and Mughal art. The hexagon has a dual, 'reversible' nature by virtue of the fact that a planar hexagon may also appear as a solid cube, seen from one of its corners, if the hexagonal is drawn with any three of its points joined to its centre with straight lines (see diagram). This is the underlying composition in a painting depicting Jahangir enjoying the Hindu festival of Holi, **Fig. 2.2** on the next page. Viewing the major diagonals of the composition and the sides of the page together, the viewer may pick out the hexagonal form. This is further elaborated by the suggestion in the interior space of the painting of a cube traced by the edges of by the upright behind supporting the canopy. This is where the Emperor Jahangir is shown with a halo. The edges of the page, the edge of the carpet and the divan, as well as the poses of the figures form the



2.2. *Jahangir at the Hindu festival of Holi (the diagonal white line above has been added to help reveal the overall compositional structure)*

orthogonals of the diagram illustrated above. The 'cube', points up as well as downwards, as do the women's' elbows at the centre of the painting. The two women, one forcing the other to drink, form a kind of pivot. These engage with yet another woman to the left, who squirts coloured paint at them with some bellows reinforcing the lines of the cube, which is also a hexagon. And like this diagram, the painting is full of interesting paradoxes, the image of the king powerless before the empire of women of the harem, yet even here, order is wound up in this apparent chaos, the mythological stability of the hexagon-cube prevents the unthinkable, the total abandon of Jahangir to the senses. Here the hexagonal form creates a bounded image, an organising principle that balances the chaos and spontaneity of the celebration portrayed. It is here also that we see the fundamental workings of the mytho-logical mind: carnivals reproduce the 'other' time of chaos and the reversal of the ordinary through laughter.[21] According to Mircea Eliade, it is also the time of the debasement of the 'priest king' with his subjects. Yet, the picture it may also be seen as the vertex between Hinduism and Islam and between male and female principles, sensuality and order. Inherent in the visual chaos of the carnival is the prism which provides the reader with a reminder of the ultimate return to order and harmony that is possible. The riotous abandon of colours and shapes, feminine beauty and the spontaneity of the dance are all elements that form the sensory surface of the image and only with the key of reading the picture with some knowledge of geometry are order and balance restored.

It may be remembered here that the cube, which is also schematically arranged as a hexagon, is also the symbol of the balance between the four elements and a symbol of the earth, created by these four elements. The holy *Kaaba* in Mecca, around which pilgrims annually circumambulate, is also a cube. It unites heaven and earth because it is both a square cube signifying physical three-dimensionality and hexagonal from a conceptual point of view, signifying non-physical two-dimensionality. It is both a physical and mental representation, many Muslims mentally visualise it in prayer, as it is one of their sacred duties to go on a pilgrimage to see it in the flesh. For the pilgrim, laying eyes on the *Kaaba* is the apotheosis of a prayer come true, the meeting of mental with actual vision.

The hexagon-cube appears as a dynamic prism, turning in space with each change of perception: one side may appear to recede into the space, or extrude out of it, it then resumes its appearance as a flat shape with six sides. The octahedron, like the cube and the icosahedron, is seen in two-dimensional perspective, or more properly in two-dimensions as a hexagon, or as outlined as a hexagon. The hexagon, with various angles and lines joined up inside its perimeter may be seen as a two-dimensional space or imagined as a three dimensional object: this dual nature explains its fascination amongst artists who

obviously used it as a way of depicting spatial recession and protrusion, creating a visual conundrum that can be likened to the binocular rivalry of a gestalt diagram. In such cases, three-dimensional space is not shown using the illusion of volume by shading but by appealing to the *a priori* knowledge of three-dimensionality, rather than three-dimensionality as seen with the eye, or with reference to the viewer's body. Clearly, this has parallels with the distinction between the eye that sees external objects and the mind's eye, which knows or visualises them as apperception. In this painting, the artist was not only engaging with his own phenomenology of vision but communicating it to posterity.

The hexagon in these instances functions as a mental denotation, an eidetic diagram, not as an attempted re-creation of the optical field of vision. This mental denotation or image could represent the essence of *tarh* as an eidetic formation but in its manifestation in material form, pigment, and paper, brings to mind the notion of the creation of matter from thought or spirit, or the creation of volume from flatness. Painting has a dual nature, it is a mental shape or configuration, and it is also a image of the visible world. As with the hexagon-cube, which is its token it figures forth both two and three-dimensionality. The hexagon signifies an intermediate or paradoxical state, or phenomenology, much like painting itself. Expressed in an anagogical way, the shape conjures up the vision of form and volume sublimated into non-corporeal abstraction or mental notation. As with the women's elbows, the hexagon can point up, as well as down, but also, like them, it designates a geometrical pattern. As with the several examples I have dealt with here, it is both instrumental in structuring the form of the painting as well as contributing to its meaning.

In Islamic Sufi thought, the hexagon symbolises the six directions (the four cardinal points, plus up and down). The six-pointed star, or hexagram, which may be seen as an extrapolation or inverse of the hexagon, is the insignia Solomon (Suleiman) has on the seal of his ring to circumscribe totally the world of the demons, closing off their escape in every direction; the hexagon traceable inside the hexagram has all its sides bound. Mughal culture is not the only one to use the hexagon as a nexus where all the directions and dimensions meet. In some Chinese funerary rituals, the use of six jades to signify six directions brings together various geographical and cosmological strands centred on or inscribed into the human body: one jade is placed at the head of the corpse, another at the feet, one each at the hands, one behind the back and the other on the stomach. The jades are coloured blue, yellow, green, red, white, and black and represent heaven, earth and the four quarters. Such an arrangement also figures forth the idea of three-dimensionality (left, right, above below, forward and backward). In association with Solomon and the omniscience of the all-

seeing eye, able from its vantage point to take in all possible directions and views is the use of the hexagon as the symbol for infinite knowledge and power. This is expressed in the myth surrounding Iskandar (Alexander the Great) who, in the poet Nizami's work, orders the invention of a mirror of six sides so that he may peer into the all-seeing mirror to obtain omniscient consciousness. The hexagon is the symbol par excellence of vision and visibility and is thus extremely appropriate as a device used in painting or image making, which doubly signifies visual power.[22] The hexagon is an interstice between physical appearance and mental *a priori* visualisation. It is the symbol of all encompassing knowledge, the actual and symbolic; the shape that encompasses the inner eye and the eye of flesh, both exoteric and esoteric knowledge, which may explain that, besides the numerous scenes depicting royal courts the hexagonal principle is used for organising paintings of the gatherings of holy men or scholars[23] and in one example, Christ is depicted enthroned on a hexagonal throne-platform.[24]

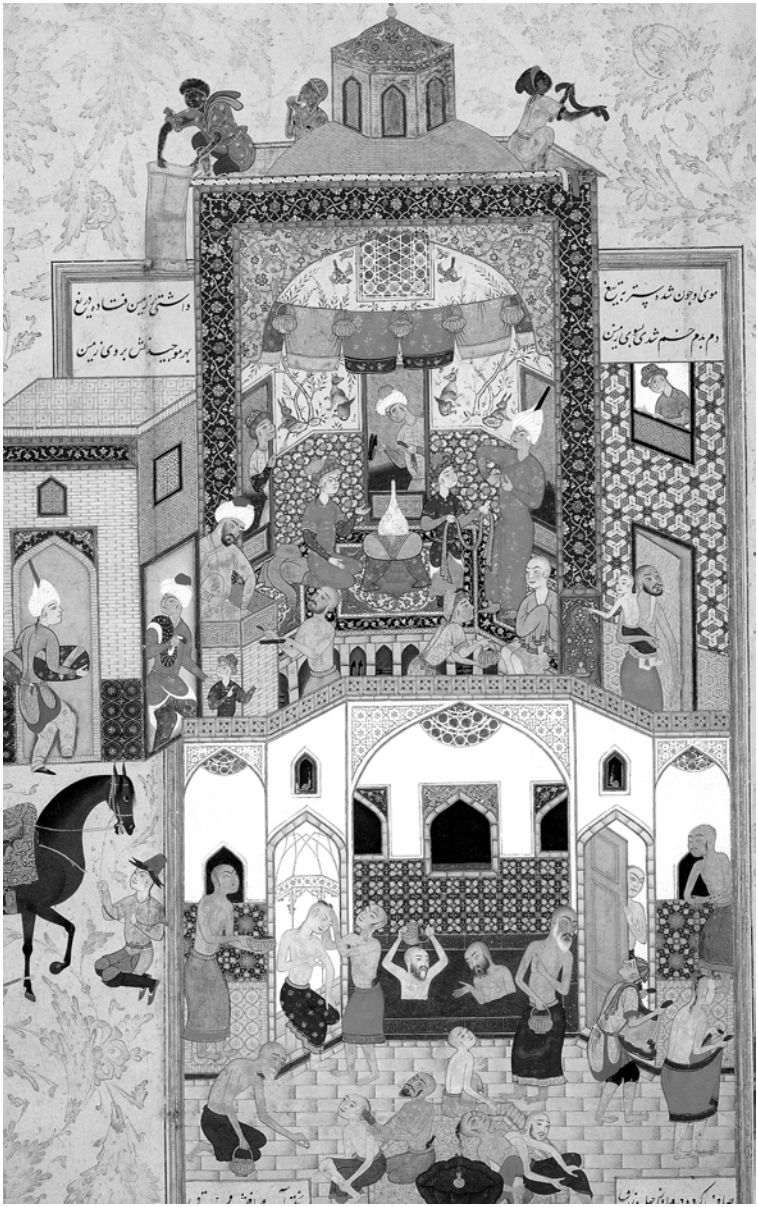
Because the hexagon signifies all directions, it is the symbol of omnipresence. It is thus also appropriated as an imperial symbol. The hexagram and hexagonal forms are distinct features found in the Akbar period tomb of the Emperor Humayun and in other buildings.[25] The hexagram, with hexagonal centre is closely associated with the Mughal royal image on the blue trim of the Emperor's costume in a painting in the Musée Guimet of Jahangir holding up a painting of Akbar, 1615. Yet, the concept of "all directions" may also point to other, unknown directions, those in psycho-geography, the inner world of the soul, or in celestial and sublunary spheres, for example. Thrones are frequently also featured in hexagonal form, mainly for Akbar[26] but also for Babur[27] and for Timur[28] and Chingiz Khan,[29] and of course, in numerous canopied or pavilion structures, the most famous of which must be the *Princes in the House of Timur* in the British Museum; yet shaykhs are also shown in hexagonal compositions or on hexagonal thrones.[30] All these examples reinforce the relationship between exoteric power and esoteric vision both of which the Mughal emperors prided themselves with possessing. This may be seen especially in the pavilion format, which places the emperor in the cosmic centre of all the directions, including above (heaven) and below (earth), implied by the hexagonal forms above and below. The hexagon in these contexts serves to express an intermediate world between heaven and earth that is reflected in the world of images.

Hexagons also have a role in imperial displays of temporal and spiritual power in the form of emeralds.[31] One splendid Mughal hexagonal emerald in particular, is inscribed with a verse from the *Qur'an* from the chapter entitled, *The Throne* (*al-Kursi*), part of which mentions "His [God's] throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth."[32] The hexagonal emerald links both the hexagonal form with the throne, and with the colour green (in many

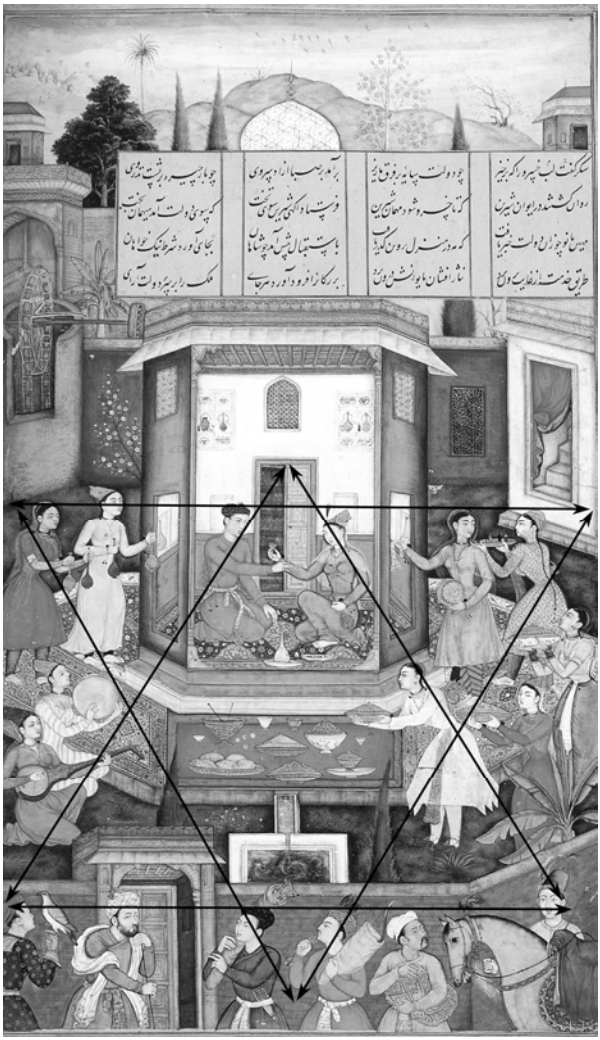
cosmologies the colour of God's throne) but it also links the hexagonal with the concept of heaven and earth. A painting by Hashim of Shah Jahan standing on a globe and with angels hovering above him with the royal symbols of crown, parasol and sword features the emperor holding a hexagonal jewel or piece of gold, which has to be considered in the same light as his other royal symbols.[33] The hexagon points both to heaven above and below to the earth on which he stands, inviting the implication that he is an omniscient mediator, master of all directions, both worldly power and spiritual knowledge the source of which is heaven above. The hexagonal jewel in his hand can only serve to strengthen that message strengthened by the geometry found in painting. This was not the only time that Shah Jahan was depicted holding a hexagonal jewel of this kind.[34] It must also be remembered that there was a considerable superstitious regard for hexagonal emeralds that were considered powerful amulets against the evil eye.[35]

Figural arrangements and architectural details are formed into hexagonal arrangements to convey aesthetic balance and perfection. This reached a sophisticated level in Persian painting, particularly in miniatures by Bihzad, or by those he influenced at the court in Herat in the 1480s. *A Celebration at the Court of Sultan Husayn Mirza* from a *Bustan* ('orchard') of Sa'di, 1488[36] is a double frontispiece whose ingenious figural arrangement across two pages is hexagonal in design.[37] The hexagonal building on the left establishes the hexagonal structure of the figure pattern, as does the double hexagon suggested by the fence on the right.[38] The underlying hexagonal plan may be seen in many illustrations by other artists in the Mughal-owned Persian *Khamsa* of Nizami dated 1494-5,[39] and in Shah Tahmasp's *Khamsa* of Nizami copied around 1539-43.[40] As in the Mughal examples given above, it was also favoured in Iran for thrones and pavilions in many manuscripts.

Outside of the domain of the royal court, the hexagon has also been used in Persian art to signify earthly existence united in the same place with the higher spiritual plane. It has also been used to portray encounters between heavenly and earthly impulses. In another Persian painting, a hexagonal building with two levels is used to show the link between heaven and earth. In a Safavid painting by Sultan Muhammad, from a *Diwan* of Hafiz, 1526-27, the artist paints the theme recurrent in Persian poetry of physical and spiritual intoxication, the former leading to the latter by way of subjugating worldly knowledge or rationality. The two aspects of the picture, the angels above and the wine drinkers below are both shown as hexagonal areas, one mirroring the other.[41] In the painting of the *Sufi in the Hammam* **Fig. 2.3**, from the illustrated manuscript of the *Haft Awrang* ("The Seven Thrones", tales with a mystical and esoteric import), by the poet Jami, this copy produced 1556-57[42] there are two levels, each echoing the hexagonal of the cupola at the top.



2.3. *Sufi in the Hammam*



2.4. *Khusrau and Shirin entertained. The Mughal Khamsa of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi*

On the top level, there is a loose but very evident figural arrangement in a hexagon shape, which is revisited below with a larger hexagonal arrangement. The room above is an ante-chamber which appears as changing room, a place where youths receive garments from their clientele, a place where people leave behind their worldly possessions and social distinctions including (outside), a

horse and attendant. Below is a scene of semi-nudity, which one might expect in a *hammam*. The painting is able to broach several contrasts: head (above) versus body (below); the intellect/the senses; dress/undress; societal mores versus covert desires. The hexagonal figural arrangement, however, which is repeated throughout each level, suggests that these contrasts are only superficial: the theme of the story is that divine love is reflected by profane love, and that the dervish who picks up the strands of hair of the youth he loves on the *hammam* floor is seeking the highest vision of divine union, and this symmetry (or contrast) is emphasised by the mirroring of hexagonal compositions both above and below in pictorial space.

In Mughal painting not only the architecture, but also the arrangement of figures were used to suggest geometrical forms. In the painting of Khusrau and Shirin entertained by musicians, **Fig. 2.4** is a composition dominated by the hexagonal of the central pavilion and the raised platform where many of the figures are placed. The figural arrangement consists of a series of couples on either side of Khusrau and Shirin creating a horizontal band of figures that suggest the base of an inverted triangle, whose apex lies between the two figures outside the palace compound at the bottom of the painting. This register of figures is repeated by this assembly of courtiers, hawk, sword and bow bearers and horse attendants outside of the compound at the bottom of the picture. This forms the basis of an opposing triangle whose apex is above the seated couple at the centre, Khusrau and Shirin. This creates an overall six-pointed star, or hexagram. This is used as a way to integrate upper and lower registers, inner court areas with what is going on outside the enclosure but it also serves to harmonise male and female principles shown as a line of female figures above and contrasting with the line of men below. The gazes of the figures also strengthen orthogonals and lines of force. In Hinduism the hexagram, the interpenetration of an upward pointing and downward pointing triangle, known as the *Satkona Yantra* is a token of the masculine and feminine principles of divine consciousness and there are numerous other representations based on the hexagram of lovers meeting in Mughal art.

We have seen that in Persian painting, the hexagonal form of composition is not only employed as an appropriate schema for royal power but is used for paintings to reinforce the idea of spiritual wisdom, which is the equally powerful but opposing counterpart to temporal authority. In Islamic Sufism, the hexagram unites heaven and earth. This is often also the case in Mughal painting. In contexts where a composition needs to be made appropriate for the central message of spiritual knowledge or religious debate, the hexagonal principle often makes an appearance in Mughal art and follows the Sufi tradition of the hexagon signifying all-seeing wisdom. This can be seen in the painting of the disputing physicians shown in the previous chapter, **Fig. 1.4**. One of the

earlier appearances of this composition is a painting of holy men, c. 1575 where the space between the figures can be read clearly as a hexagon or a hexagram.[43] This is also the case in a painting of a young prince (possibly modeled on Akbar) arriving at a gathering by Dawlat.[44] The basic hexagonal scheme is repeated in the *Six Sages in Discussion on a Terrace* c. 1640-1650 where the sages create a clear hexagon in the centre of the picture, it is perfectly poised between that shape and an oval or triangle and the visual paradox is attractive to the eye and keeps it engaged. Similarly, the gatherings of sages in many paintings use figures as points in the hexagonal arrangements.[45]

It can be seen that Mughal art was not based primarily on perspective but on planar geometry found not only in religious ideology but in painting also. That such comparisons were made is evident in Abu'l Fazl's phrase, "the letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry [...] so then also for painting."[46] The dominant hexagonal form most probably became a fascinating compositional device used over and again in Persian and Mughal art not only because it may have carried with it various traditional connotations of royal and spiritual power but also because it implied a system of analogies ordering the visible and invisible worlds. The hexagonal form is inherently suggestive of both flat and recessional space and this duality tends to interlock, appropriately, with its dual semantic nature, implying both intellectual abstraction and also physical presence to which are also attached a reference to the direction above (heaven) and below (earth) respectively. In Persian and Mughal painting, and especially in the depiction of the ruler suspended between a hexagonal pavilion above, mirrored by an hexagonal throne below, the hexagonal may also be a way of showing the joining of the celestial and the terrestrial worlds by kingship.[47] By extension, this is also the joining of the purely conceptual and the corporeal in the hexagon itself. In this way, the hexagon may be seen to have a mysterious quality and can be regarded as having a value broadly similar to that apparent in the pre-illusionist tradition of the Byzantine icon, which embodies and makes visual spiritual truth; here, the hexagon inscribed almost invisibly into the body of the image is an exemplar of Abu'l Fazl's "spiritual geometry."

Any system of spatial relationships in pictures may be traced to perceptions of the body: above/below, front/back and left/ right. The examples of women's elbows in **Fig. 2.2** but also many of the figures in **Fig. 2.4** (see the men in the lowest register also) show us how the body was used by Mughal artists as a dance form, expressive of the cardinal points and geometrical principles. Anyone who has ever seen a *Kathak* dance (or perhaps even more so, the angular diagonals of the *Bharatnatyam* dance sequence) would see this geometry in motion. These dances transform the body and its actions into geometrical ideals just as painting and drawing geometry bid the mind, the hand and gesture into geometrical motion. It is perhaps also this, which Islamic

tradition refers to when it speaks of "spiritual geometry" because it involves the dynamism of both mental and physical cooperation, internal and external dimensions.

Dynamic Geometry

Earlier studies of compositional schema in Persian art tended to privilege the form of the spiral over other viewing choices. This is the case in Papadopoulo's work, which was important for bringing to light the precise manner in which a number of Persian miniatures are laid out and planned, and for suggesting that figural compositions, especially the faces, attract the eye to underlying geometrical arrangements.[48] However, many of the spiral forms he identified are in fact, triangular or star-form configurations from which spirals can easily be traced. In other words, the spirals, far from being the essential characteristic of a pictorial composition, may actually have been secondary to other geometric configurations.[49] Papadopoulo illustrates a double-page illustration of the Nizami story of the Sultan Sanjar and the old woman painted in 1537 with a double helix form superimposed over the image.[50] The author has drawn attention to the placement of figures within this schema but has failed to note the most obvious compositional scheme of them all: by drawing out the spiral forms, he has merely marked the points of a six pointed star, each point the head of a figure, on each page.[51] The dangers of discovering compositional plans in paintings is to privilege one by suppressing another, and by implication preferring one ideological interpretation associated with it, by deferring another. A multiplicity of compositional plans (with their possible semantic associations) is not only a possible but also desirable in the reading of the complexity of this visual aesthetic. Indeed, the co-existence of many compositional viewing approaches indicated by the inherent design structures of Persian and Mughal paintings are precisely what distinguishes such art forms.

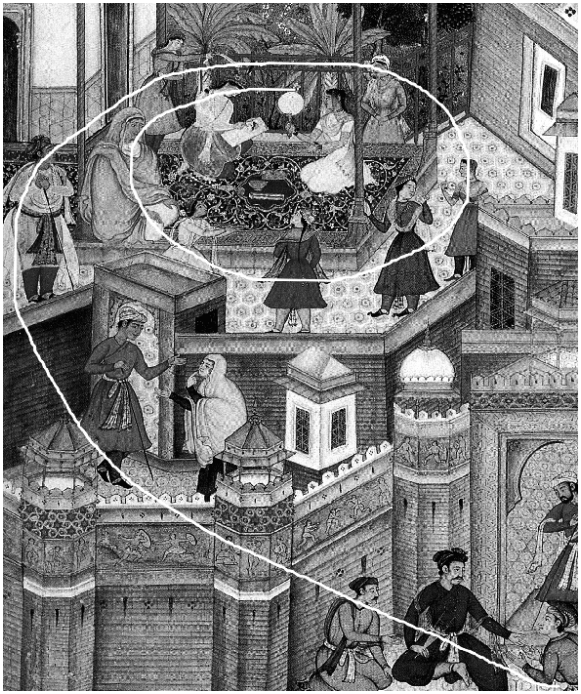
Papadopoulo was correct to point out underlying compositional schemes and the spiral is a form that does appear in Mughal art, obviously akin to the use of spirals as a principle of *tarh* found in Persian art. The compositional device may be adapted from the spiral forms woven into carpets or depicted in illumination. More appropriately for Papadopoulo's method[52] of tracing the spiral through joining the heads of depicted figures together in an imaginary spiraling line in some cases in these decorative schema, was the *waq-waq* scroll descended from the legend of Alexander and the talking tree, the spiral actually intersects the heads of humans and fantastic beasts seen in many representations in Persian art. In the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama* a depiction of the emperor in a great hunt near Lahore in 1567, the whole of nature, animals of the hunt, cheetahs and a great many deer and antelope are composed in a spiral measured

from the tent at the centre, through various concentric circles and out to the fence perimeter. It is used primarily to convince the viewer of a great swirling movement of bodies. The great spiral also serves to put Akbar at the cosmic centre as the prime mover of events, the solar point around which all satellite forms rotate. In the same manuscript, an elaborate vertical spiral is evident in the famous Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama* page of *The Siege of Chittor*, but rather than seeing this compositional device as a residue of spiritual circumambulation, as Papadopoulo might suggest, the artist Miskina has used it as a great and complex panoramic device uniting all aspects of the vista. He has integrated the tighter coils of the spiral (around the fort) both to suggest distance and the density of bodies and actions but also to evoke the feeling of the siege, the surrounding forces gathering momentum, tightening the noose around the citadel. But the spiral is rarely, if ever, the sole compositional device employed in Mughal or Persian art, as Papadopoulo presumed. *The Siege of Chittor* is counterbalanced by a series of radial lines fanning out from the centre indicated by cannons, aspects of architecture, hills and the decorative aspects of the tents in the far bottom left, which also serve as a backdrop to present Akbar at the mover of events. Both together, these compositional schemes present the distinct impression of a grid-like structure of smaller squares, which gradually becomes smaller towards the top. Particularly telling spiral compositions in Akbar period painting may be seen in the British Library *Khamsa* and the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama*.[53]

In a painting of Akbar, being informed of his son Salim's birth **Fig. 2.5** the lively scene of celebration and dancing is at first glance, chaotic but the spiral form regulates the rhythms of the painting and suggests music. The spiral begins with Akbar and follows the heads of courtiers on the left hand side of the painting where a courtier is doing deep obeisance, his arm trailing to indicate the continuing spiral which is further strengthened by the crescent of a sword and scabbard further down at the center of the picture, then up along a line of courtiers far on the right hand side, and back out again past the outer row of courtiers on Akbar's right. The momentum is continued by the figure of a drummer bottom left and finally to a man with outstretched arms whose gesture complements the tail end of the spiral. Again, a hexagram may also be traced in the figural arrangement.

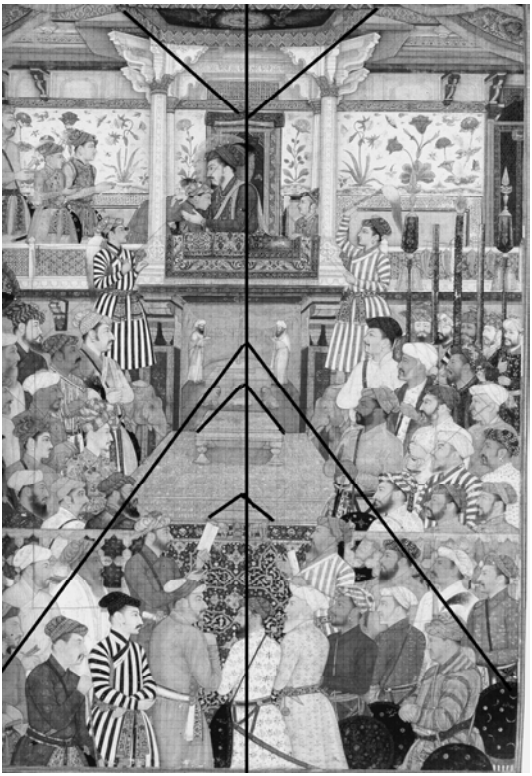
The spiral can also be used in Mughal art to suggest the opposing symmetry of high and low, a simultaneity of activities and two different kinds of space, one elite, inside and above, the other outside, below and public, the spatial contrasts are found in Mughal architecture.

2.5. *Akbar informed of Salim's Birth*



2.6. *The Princess Paints a Self-Portrait*
The figures pick out a spiral terminating in the round mirror.
At the top, the figures also form a hexagon

The spiral preserves the concept of simultaneity in the narrative, several actions occur at the same time and are separated in space, but they are united in one overall compositional pattern that suggests rhythm and counter rhythm. This may be seen in the *Princess Paints a Self-Portrait*, in the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami **Fig. 2.6** where the top half of the painting (above, inside, privileged) represents a scene where the princess is surrounded by her attendants in a circle, which is part of spiral (indicated by the arrangement of heads from top to bottom and the inner wall) that leads down to the two figures in the centre of the painting, a liminal space.



2.7. *Shah Jahan receiving his three sons*

The bottom half (below, outside, under privileged) completes the tail of the spiral form. The top half of the painting can also be seen as a hexagonal arrangement of figures. Typical also of Mughal painting is the arrangement of pictorial space in several registers in a painting, pointed out in Chapter One, this has its origins in some of the oldest Indian art, with the lower register appearing as either outside and peripheral to the scene and lower down in social rank; the perimeter/access point is usually guarded by a man with a stick.

Even when paintings do not represent architecture these registers persist, often in conjunction with spiral compositions. In the same illustrated *Khamsa* depicting *Faridun and the Gazelle*, the spiral begins with the circular ploughing activity of the farmer in the distance top right hand corner. The rocks to the right, the arm of Faridun and the horse's head, suggest a downward movement from here. Following this gesture, our eyes are directed to the lower register of attendants who continue the line with gestures of their own.[54]

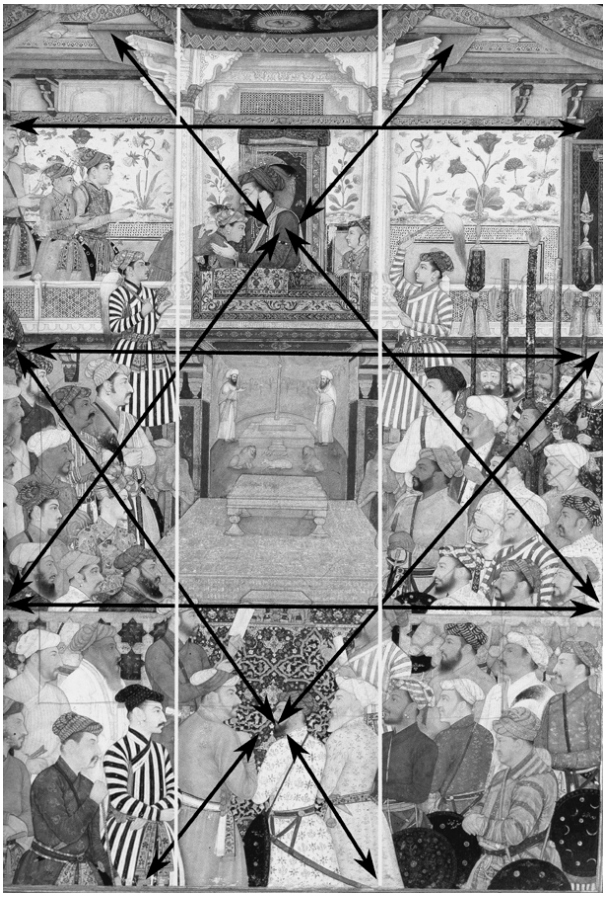
Beyond the subject of spirals, and more recently, the scholar Ebba Koch has attempted a study of the some formal principles of Shah Jahan period painting. But whereas the spiral for Papadopoulo was indicative of a vaguely defined esotericism, for Koch the symmetry and visual hierarchy of this Shah Jahan period painting is a direct reflection of hierarchical political organisation:

> The fundamental components of miniature painting, in terms of composition and figure arrangement, as well as antithetical stylistic modes, were systematically explored to political ends, to create programmatic statements of order and hierarchy, the basic tenets of Shah Jahan's ideology.[55]

However, the relationship between Mughal principles of composition and political propaganda is based on an a rather simplistic model, reducing Shah Jahan period painting to simple compositional formulae such as "vertical hierarchy and centralising symmetry"[56] which is supposed to reflect political, vertical hierarchy and symmetry, "the corporate identity of the ruling elite under Shah Jahan."[57] One of the pictures from the *Padshah-nama*, depicting Shah Jahan receiving his three eldest sons is cited as an example of certain compositional principles, and has lines superimposed on it to help the viewer see the composition **Fig. 2.7**.[58] But these visual lines are not indicative of one-point perspective at all. These are, in fact, only part of a more complex compositional structure in this painting. The role of Shah Jahan as controller of the compositional structures of Shah Jahan period painting is overstated in order to prove that a pictorial political programme is reflected in one kind of interpretation of the compositions of the *Padshah-nama* when, in fact, many other more complex organising principles may be detected.[59]

The painting from the *Padshah-nama* singled out for compositional reduction by Koch with a network of lines marked over it, privileges a viewing choice over others. Koch's preferred visual rays, which are based on European perspectival elements rather than traditional Islamic planar geometries, and the political connotations they are supposed to represent can be overwritten and absorbed into a more complex overall compositional structure, see **Fig. 2.8**. Although Koch is right to identify the obvious symmetrical structure of the picture indicated by the two bearers of flywhisks placed left and right of the throne-balcony, the meaning of this symmetry is far from being a political statement.[60]

Emphasis on symmetry obscures other viewing options. One major compositional device that is overlooked consists of several horizontal bands and vertical lines (emphasised by the two slaves with flywhisks) creating a number of rectangular boxes. On either side of the entrance to this perimeter stand two figures holding papers; they are placed along two vertical, dominant visual lines that lead up to the pillars of the throne-balcony.



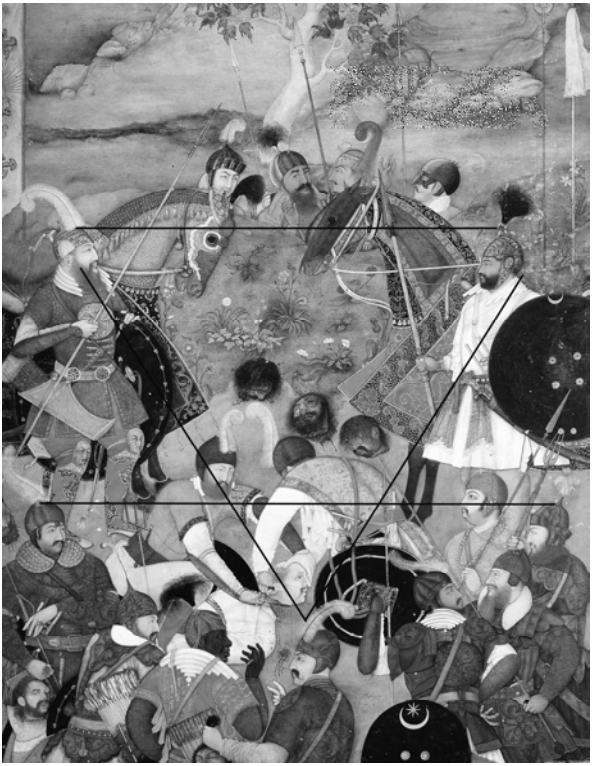
2.8. *Shah Jahan receiving his three sons*

Yet even more complex is the possibility of reading the whole painting in terms of a network of hexagons with possible triangular subdivisions. Yet other readings are possible and this choice is the very point of the composition: it allows for a visual dynamic that is anything but static. This dynamism is the result of polysemy: the ability to trace a number of geometric schemata in a process of continual flux, and rhythm. The composition is the collusion of apparent naturalism (in its random juxtapositions of detail), which are only varied according to a scheme) and an under-the-surface visual order, a multiplicity of geometrical readings one superimposed over the other, which give way to other optical delights, colours, patterns, surfaces.

Such compositional complexity allows us to choose from a number of viewing options and go beyond the reading of Shah Jahan court painting as merely static, visually or ideologically.[61] Other semantic meanings are possible because of the multivalent visual choices, which may also be seen simultaneously, constantly shifting before the eyes.[62] The dynamism is not to be seen in the figures or in the potential of the figures to move, but in the way the complex geometry and visual patterning cause the eye to re-focus, or as a kaleidoscope reconfigures patterns, to create different perceptions of time and space. The artistry lies in the precise formation of figural arrangements that allows for various viewing preferences to co-exist: triangular, hexagonal, or simply symmetrical. Multiple ways of understanding the pictorial order are thus maximised rather than reduced, and finely poised to avoid the violence of one dominant composition allowing cooperation between them. And this aesthetic is related to another, discussed in Chapter One, **Fig. 1.6**, where the flatness of forms and the intricacy of the abstract designs inscribed within them allow for the background or the foreground to gain primacy in the viewer's attention, or for both to be seen at the same time. As in the use of metaphor that allows for the dual vision of the literal and the figural, these paintings allow for the co-existence of mimesis and anti-illusionist aesthetics organised along a myriad of geometrical sight lines.

With the *Padshah-nama* manuscript illustrations, the aesthetic of dynamic interaction with compositional elements comes clearly into view, with concomitant polysemic interpretations that transcend a narrowing of interests represented by political interpretation alone. The discovery of this "compositional play"[63] in Mughal art not only adds to our understanding of the complexity of Mughal visual cognition by which it is formed and at which it is aimed, it shows us a particular example in art history of the literary notion of "re-figuration", where the viewer constructs or chooses to read the pictorial order in various, rather than specifically prescribed ways.[64] None of these choices represent a closure as each possible way of reading the composition is in continual tension or counter-balance with others, creating shifting patterns that form and re-form. But the artistry lies in safeguarding a large number of possible geometrical understandings.[65] It also lies in acknowledging and extending a formal order known to both viewer and artist.[66]

Significantly, in the *Padshah-nama* geometry is not used primarily to construct perspective on the premise of a unifying, single vanishing point placed on the focal point of the Emperor. This would indeed be an exercise comparable to Leonardo's with the head of Christ in his *Last Supper*, in the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan and it would suggest that perspective is a kind of symbolic form in Mughal art.[67]



2.9. *The Execution of Khan Jahan Lodi*

In the Mughal context, there are several vanishing points. Indeed, the single vanishing point is a rare occurrence in Mughal art. The Emperor is primarily central not because the whole of the pictorial order is based on the correspondence of vanishing point coinciding with principal figure, as it would be in European art, but because of a series of planar geometric relationships that lead all viewing choices to this centrifugal force, not illusionistically or stereometrically but through planar geometry. In European art, the viewer is the picture's aim, the object of its intention. In the *Padshah-nama* the viewer is primarily a disembodied eye, able to view multiple geometric understandings, not a one-point perspective that "stares at us across the whole pictorial world

from its place on the horizon"[68] and thereby to fix and acknowledge an optimal viewing point. If there is a political point in this painting, it is not indicated by a predominant European perspectival scheme but by the interplay between a stable order and a dynamic one. The emperor is a stable, singular point in many different geometrical relationships (none of them based on stereoscopic perspective) which suggest the effect of dynamic shifts, changes, and choices. Read in a structuralist sense, the paintings in the *Padshah-nama* have a consistent visual appearance that suggests a meaningful contrast of permanence (the singular, iconic emperor, above) versus the many below, changing and fluctuating in their myriad colours and shifting relations to each other. The main contrasts are those between the one and the many, the eternal and the transient, the permanent and the impermanent.[69]But also embodied by the intricacy of design is the principle of the panopticon, supreme visibility as power, yet not only the Emperor's eye but here also, the aesthetic empowerment of the viewer who is at liberty to exercise the imagination of geometrical re-figuration in endless ways.

Other doubts about the attempt to essentialise Shah Jahan period composition as purely political propaganda based on perspective spring to mind when one sees these perspectival and symmetrical schemes in use in pictures with no overt political content. The symmetry and perspectival visual lines suggested by Koch may be seen in a number of much older (and non-political) paintings, one from a miniature dating from around 1540-1550 retouched by Bishan Das, often referred to as Sa'di's visit to an Indian Temple.[70] The fact the picture is so much older than the *Padshah-nama* miniatures (the *tarh* fixed centuries earlier), yet pre-figures many of their fundamental compositional schemes suggests that the *Padshah-nama* artists were following familiar 'flat' conventions evident in Persian art, not a perspectival one from the European painting tradition. At first sight, Sa'di's visit to an Indian temple appears to conform to a centralising symmetrical axis with the kind of chevron forms suggested by Koch for Shah Jahan receiving his three eldest sons. This however, is only part of the story. Not only is there a dominant hexagonal form pointed out by the six figures on the perimeters of the whole grouping (and repeated in the tesserae in the strip beneath the pillars) but the central square formed by the two figures at the top and the bases of the pillars indicate other compositional choices that may be available to the viewer.

Spirals, hexagonal forms and general theory of dynamic geometrical patterning challenge the assumption that pictorial order was subordinated totally to political programmes. The pursuit of tradition in visual aesthetics and the elaboration of this tradition seem to have been primary concerns in Mughal painting up to and including the Shah Jahan period. The hexagon/hexagram composition, as well as some other compositional patterns may be seen in a

painting of the death of Khan Jahan Lodi in *Padshah-nama* manuscript **Fig. 2.9**. The feature of the high horizon with figures is taken from Persian art, this is primarily an aesthetic reference, and the picture is organised on non-naturalistic lines, as are most pictures that are organised on the principle of equally measured registers.[71] The whole of the picture is symmetrical with the roughly similar perspectival visual lines highlighted by Koch in Shah Jahan receiving his eldest three sons **Fig. 2.7**. An eight-pointed star consisting of the heads of the principle figures in the painting supersedes this limited perspectival scheme and shows that the artist painted with a more complex geometrical *tarh* in mind. Each of the star's six points is formed by six figures, each with a feather in their helmet in exact and measured relation to each other. The spear of the soldier with white plumed helmet on the left, and spears held by soldiers lower down on the right hand side gently support the angles and orthogonals of the hexagram, as do the horses' caparisons and horizontal straps, and the 'V' shape, slightly to one side formed by the interlocked arms of the executors below. All these compositional lines reinforce the artist's consciously crafted geometrical design for the painting. But that is not all, other straps, spears, swords and scabbards in other areas of the painting hint at an overall latticework design for the pictorial order.

Dominating the upper central area of the picture (in the top triangle of the hexagram) is an outward gazing figure who obviously has a part to play in these events, as he is shown with his hands held up in surprise, he is being arrested by three soldiers with lances. This has to be Farid, mentioned in the text as one of Khan Jahan Lodi's sons who was captured alive. Such identification is attractive as the figure peers out to meet the viewer's gaze as if to ask for pity. Identification is made easier reading the compositional structure of the painting as a hexagram, with Farid at the zenith and at the polar opposite, the decapitated head of his brother at the nadir (with the other stable points taken up by the imperial guards). We begin to see the pathetic expression of Farid at the centre of the painting, who impresses us with the feeling of the inescapable fate of those who choose to cross the Emperor's path, captured by the systematic order of his army and visually symbolised by the systematic order of his artist in this painting; yet how marvelously the compositional design has led us to this consideration. It is also possible to trace a spiral of heads in this painting, as well as a series of downward and upward pointing triangles formed by the heads of the soldiers and the horizon. The company of men also forms a definite overall *mandorla* shape, favored by many Renaissance artists for compositions of the Virgin and Child. The artist has allowed for the overlaying of several compositional schemes as part of an aesthetic tradition of ordering and viewing images.

In addition to the interplay of figures in pictorial space and architectural details which can indicate geometrical compositions, depictions of the direction of faces and the sight lines of the gaze in paintings have been shown to act as devices that help the viewer to form an idea of the pictorial structure of the image.[72] The direction of the gaze and the tilt of the head naturally lead the eye of the viewer along a line as we try to imagine what the depicted person is looking at.[73] But the line thus created with others can delineate a geometrical shape and a sense of visual order and it can also indicate meaning. In addition to the interplay of figures in pictorial space and architectural details that indicate geometrical compositions, depictions of the direction of faces and the sight lines of the gaze in paintings have been shown to act as devices that help the viewer to form an idea of the pictorial structure of the image.[74] The direction of the gaze and the tilt of the head naturally lead the eye of the viewer along a line as we try to imagine what the depicted person is looking at.[75] But the line thus created with others, can delineate a geometrical shape and a sense of pattern. The use of the gaze in this manner is taken from Persian examples. Looking again at the painting of the Sufi in the *Hammam*, one can see a network of gazes that suggests the underlying theme, which I have discussed as one of sensual desire in the chamber below, as an alternative to the network of gazes above, in the public sphere. But the networks of gazes tend to reinforce the hexagonal schema in both chambers, **Fig. 2.3**. In the Akbar period, in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, *Khusrau and Shirin Entertained* has a series of gazes that also reinforces a sense of an underlying hexagonal pictorial order, **Fig. 2.4**.

In other pictures, the way in which an artist indicates directional lines by the projections of the gaze can lend deeper meaning to the story illustrated. The picture of the bathhouse keeper consumed by the heat of passion for his beloved is a picture that features the power of the gaze. The artist is at great pains to show how the prince attracts the gaze of all his courtiers from extreme left to the bottom of the page, and at the centre and all the way up the right hand side of the page his subjects are all shown transfixed on the face of the prince, with one or two exceptions. The network of gazes thus creates a solar pattern with the prince at the centre. He directs one at the bathhouse keeper who appears to spontaneously combust, overpowered by the light of the sun, the fire of kingship, the *farr-i-izadi* of divine effulgence.[76] Far from being a lesson in perspective learnt from the Europeans the solar compositional form, which may be mistaken for a perspectival scheme, can be read as a symbolic form signifying the sun with its rays, referring to the traditional imagery of kingship in Persian culture. The painting of *Jahangir Playing Holi* **Fig. 2.2** is another fine example of how the depicted direction of the gaze enables the viewer to follow a compositional pattern, which in turn, helps in the reading of the visual narrative, in this case, the focal point of authority that Jahangir represents despite the

chaos around him. Not only do the women close to him focus on him but so do some of the women in the foreground who play musical instruments. Similarly, in some *Padshah-nama* paintings[77] and in other Jahangir period paintings[78] the courtiers are not only ordered in a geometrical network but their gazes are ordered concentrically to mimic rays centered on the sun or, as in a painting of Jahangir presents Prince Khurram with a turban ornament in the *Padshah-nama*,[79] the gazes of one group of courtiers are set upon another group of diagonally opposing yet higher placed group of courtiers and so finally to the royal balcony. The central focus on the emperor as the sun with rays beaming out or directed on him is a feature that has also been discussed in the context of Mughal architecture.[80] The emperor is shown to have the power of attracting the gaze of others while at the same time he is all-seeing. The solar arrangement is thus not only aesthetically pleasing but conveys something of the overall meaning available.

There are other ways in which a network of gazes allows for the reading of space in Mughal art. In one double page in the *Padshah-nama,* depicting the wedding procession of Prince Shah Shuja', a complex network of gazes is used as a way to integrate the two separate pages, for many individuals on either side appear to look over the page.[81] This shows that artists deliberately used the gaze to connect distinct and separate elements in a composition. Another type of pictorial organization suggested by a network of gazes links the lower part of the picture space to an area above, "lifting" the gaze. A line of courtiers below look up to another line of courtiers placed diagonally across from them, higher up in the pictorial space and these courtiers also look up to the central figure of authority, usually placed at the centre of a painting. While there is some possibility that this organisational principle may be based on Persian precedents[82] it is more clearly and consistently used in Mughal painting for court scenes with many figures. The network of gazes used in the manner first appears in the late Akbar period. The painting of *Abu'l Fazl Presenting the Akbar-nama to Akbar*[83] combines the principle of groups of figures alternately looking up and lifting the gaze with clear demarcations of space that place the lower groups of figures outside the palace enclosure. The higher the figures are placed, the closer to Akbar they are, and the closer they are, the more they see. Clearly, the pictorial space is premised on the logic that those able to be physically closer to the emperor in order to exercise the gaze upon him or to have the emperor's gaze bestowed upon them, are the more privileged. Less privileged groups may engage in this optical relationship only indirectly. The use of such an artistic device may reflect the belief in the power of the gaze in Mughal culture and how it is possible to "transmit" the gaze.[84]

This pictorial device, creating higher and closer stages or levels of the gaze is used again emphatically in the Jahangir period in a painting by Abu'l Hasan,

c. 1620 of *Jahangir at the Jharoka Window.* [85] An elevated balcony area where the emperor ritually appeared to his subjects is the focus of their gaze and veneration. Groups of courtiers at the lowest register at the bottom right of the picture look up and across to another group on the left of the picture, which in turn looks up to a group above them to the right. It is this group that appears to gaze directly at the countenance of the emperor. But tracing the gaze in this manner creates a zigzagging rhythm of viewing from right to left and from below to above which stops at the head of the emperor, framed by the window at the top of the painting.

In the *Padshah-nama* of the Shah Jahan period, this principle of depicting the gaze is continued in court paintings. Either groups of courtiers gaze uniformly in the same direction at groups of courtiers directly across from them on the same level, or they gaze up diagonally across the picture space at courtiers placed at a higher level than they are, and these more highly placed courtiers in turn, look up to the royal balcony. The impression here is of a stepped gaze where the transference of the gaze from lower to higher groups links the lower echelons of society to the higher, which alone are privileged to gaze up to the emperor directly.[86] Again, this suggests the idea of a social hierarchy based on the premise of viewing and access to viewing the face of the emperor at the *jharoka* balcony, the display place of the Mughal emperors. This privileged viewing cooperates with the aesthetic vision exercised by enjoying the pictorial image of the network of gazes and compositional schema. This viewing of figures ritualistically viewing reflects back on the viewer's 'real time' interactivity with the image, which continually refigures the geometries of the field of vision.

Proportion

The tradition of aesthetics praising proportion, geometry, and order in the Islamic arts has been studied in depth.[87] One of the most significant principles of this tradition is that proportions govern music, poetry, architecture and calligraphy, and also, painting.

Painting may be seen in close relation to the art of writing, which should, like writing, be subordinate to a system of proportions that dominate the calligrapher's art.[88] Although scholars of Islamic cultures over several different historic periods have treated this principle of proportions as an ideal, which unites the different arts under an overall aesthetic, evidence of its existence in a practical sense in the figural painting of Mughal India and Iran is lacking. Art historians have tended to study the paintings of the Mughals without using methods of formal analysis, which look for the geometry, proportion, and order expounded by these intellectual writers.[89] In this section, I

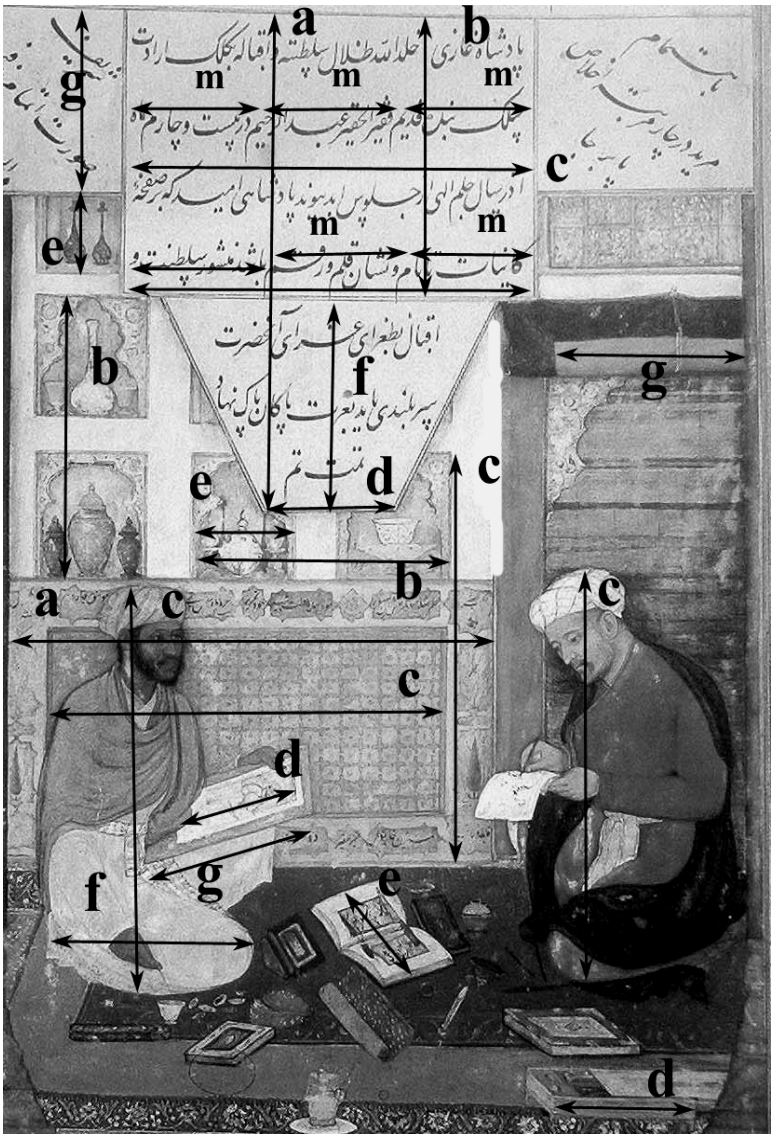
will direct my attention to providing the missing piece in the jigsaw: proof that Persian and Mughal figural painting followed the tradition of aesthetics that unites the arts with a sense of proportion. It is remarkable that many of the early Islamic pronouncements on proportions in the visual arts are followed by the Mughals as late as the eighteenth century.

There are a large number of literary and poetic references linking geometry to painting and music, many of which the Mughals were undoubtedly aware. I have already mentioned Abu'l Fazl's comparison between spiritual geometry and painting. The court historian was able to compare writing to painting because both arts use the line and proportion in a geometrically ordered framework as a basis for aesthetic appearance and achievement. A significant way in which text and image were integrated may be seen in an intriguing system of proportions evident in many Mughal illustrated manuscripts. The inherent logic of the arts of the book are measurement and line; illumination,[90] calligraphy and painting all bounded by the margin rules, the essential structure of the page but also, these margin rules and text boxes may directly or indirectly decide the proportions of the projected space within the image itself.

In the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi,[91] the painting of Khusrau and Shirin entertained by musicians by Manohar (see **Fig. 2.4** above) follows a module system that underpins the proportions of the whole picture. The system of proportion is formed by the height of the text box, identical to the height of the doorway with staircase in the background on the right hand side. The height of the compound wall in both foreground and background is also the same measurement, which is repeated also by the height of the door inside the pavilion, and by the windows of the pavilion on either side of the main couple (and by the distance between the pavilion edges and the margin on the left and door frame on the right). Remarkably, even the height of the seated figures of Khusrau and Shirin are painted equally in these measurements from the tips of their turban feathers to sash ends and feet. Other measurements are distances between heads, Khusrau and the attendant standing to the left of him (and distances between the attendants' heads and bodies taken from various text measurements in all registers of the painting); distances between heads and various edges of buildings (Shirin's head on the right with the inner edge of the pavilion, for example). The height of the pavilion is the same as the width of three columns of the text block, and so on. This aesthetically and perhaps, theologically motivated pictorial harmony belies the apparently straightforward illusion of space: everything seems to emanate from the text block, the word. In several other paintings, objects depicted in pictorial space have been based on a system of measurements in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi.[92] Significantly, also, the text block height at the centre is used as a module for the height of four figures portrayed in this pictorial space. The length of the longer

text blocks at the bottom is used for many other measurements in the painting: for walls and the width and height of pavilions and the distances between them. There are numerous other examples of similar measurements in this painting. Such a system of proportions is evident in many other manuscripts of the Akbar period. In the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami;[93] and in the *Baharistan* ('The Spring Garden') by the poet Jami,[94] the Mughal copy painted in 1595[95] in the Victoria and Albert *Babur-nama*.[96] In the *Chingiz Khan-nama* painting that shows the conqueror dividing up the world for his sons to share, **Fig. 2.1**, the measurements are very precise. The height of the upper text block is used for the measurement of the width of the golden throne (the cusped medallion in gold) and for the exact width of the cushion behind the seated figures, while the lower text block height is used for the width of the central part of the throne and for several other measured relations in the painting.

There is evidence that this module system occurs in the pictorial order of Persian painting, suggesting an inherited practice. A good example of this is a painting of the Sufi in the *Hammam* shown above **Fig. 2.3.** The width of all text blocks, above and below equals the width of the hexagonal cupola at the top of the picture and the central window of the upper chamber. The upper text block height is the same as the height of the middle window of the *hammam* in the basement and the window above, top right, directly under the text block where a man with a hat peers down to the scene below. Many other borders and lines in the painting are based on the measurements of the text height and width of the lower text block rulings. The lower text block height is equal to the height of the window in the main entrance to the left, which echoes the width of the elaborately decorated border (which is, in fact, a form of illumination) depicting a great archway above the upper chamber. This is also the width of each aspect of the hexagonal lantern at the top of the building. The measurements become more complex when one discovers that the width of the upper text blocks is three times the height of the lower text block height and this module can be used as a key for many of the measurements in the painting. Multiplying this module by two provides the length of tiled floor of the two smaller chambers flanking the *hammam* below, where two men stand on either side; even the width of the towel wrapped around one of these men (on the left hand side) has been measured to equal the height of the lower text block, as well as the width of the half-windows in the domed central chamber below, where people are bathing. Multiply this measurement by four and one arrives at the width of the roof over the entrance doorway, the height of several doors in the painting and the exact height of two figures in the *hammam* (one drying himself with a towel on the right, the other, washing the hair of a customer on the left). The height shared by the lower text blocks is also reflected in the width of the towel (top border) aired by the dark *hammam* clothes washer at the very top of the painting.



2.10. *Colophon of the Khamsa of Nizami*

Evidence of a mathematically controlled plotting of the page design as a whole, including text blocks has been observed in Shiraz painting.[97]It is most probable that the Mughals learnt about this precise division of pictorial space from Persian artists.[98]One of the most detailed examples of such integrated measurements of text blocks and the projected space may be seen in a colophon painting in the Emperor's *Khamsa* of Nizami, **Fig. 2.10**. The artist Dawlat shows himself on the left side of the image in the process of painting 'Abd al-Rahim, the calligrapher shown writing on a piece of paper on the right hand side. He was responsible for copying the pages of the book where this painting is found. He copied some of the world's finest poetry for the emperor in swift, measured, and elegant script. The calligrapher was known for his rhythmically proportioned and precise *nastaliq*, a highly attractive cursive script descended from Persian traditions of calligraphy, some of this may be seen in the illustration published here.

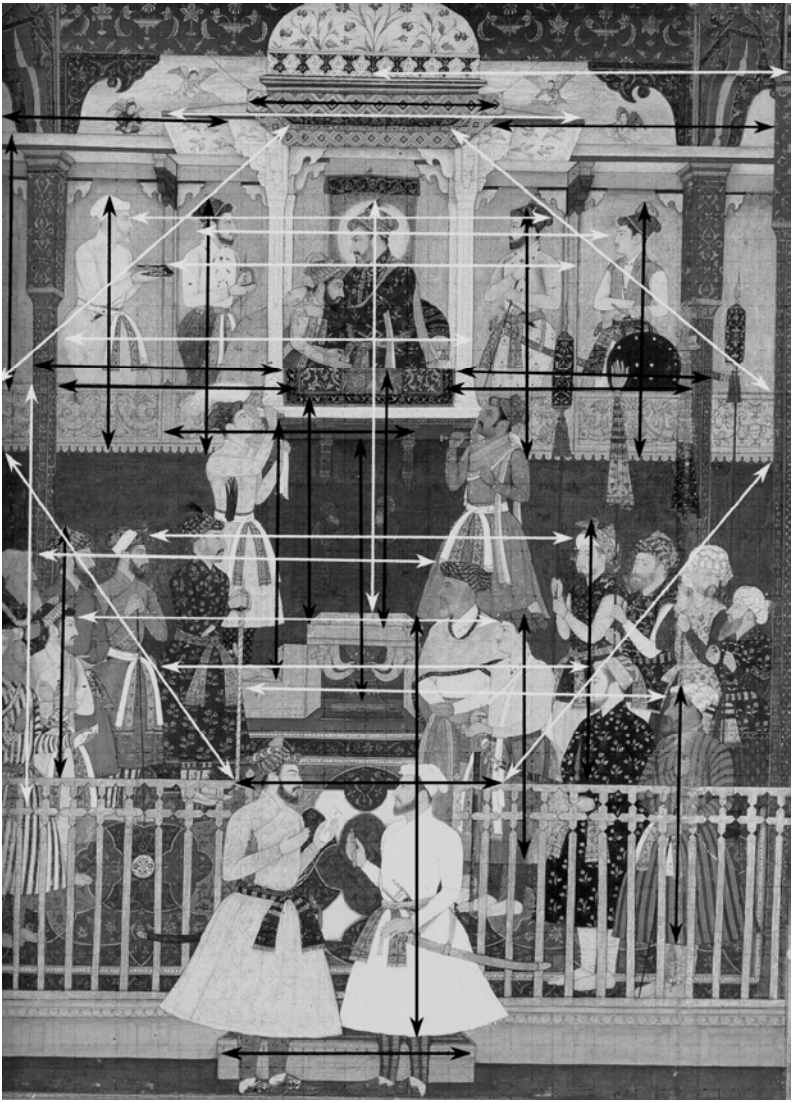
'Abd al-Rahim was named *Anbarin Qalam* (Pen of Ambergris). The poetic description is complex and relies on a synaesthetic evocation of a rare, elusive, seductive incense.[99] The painting is a remarkable integration of the arts of painting and calligraphy, not only with its main subject (an artist painting a calligrapher) but also in the integration of text block measurements and the measurements of pictorial areas, and even proportions of the body. The height of two text blocks together (a) equals the width of the dado tile area behind the figures with border (a). The height of the central text block (b) is the measurement used for the width of the two niches containing Chinese porcelain in the background (b), which recurs as the height of two niches to the left (b). The width of the central text box (c) equals the width of the inner dado tile area (c) and the height of the niches to the ground (c). Remarkably, this measurement is also used for fixing the seated height of the artist Dawlat, pictured left (c) and 'Abd al-Rahim on the right (c). This is three times the width of the bottom part of the triangular text box (d). This short measurement is repeated for Dawlat's paper resting on a board on his knee (d) and the lower edge of the pen case, bottom right hand corner (d). The width of the central niche (e) is the measure used for the width of the open book lying on the floor (e). The height of the triangular text block (f) is the same measurement for the edge of Dawlat's knee to edge of foot (f). The height of the small text block to the left (g) is the same as the rolled up curtain to the right (g) and the length of the board (g) on which Dawlat rests his paper.

Other measurements are also integrated too numerous to mention here but the two occurrences of (d) appear to be an integral part of the calligraphy, where, on six occasions the distances between the letter "m" (in Urdu, called "*mim*") are the same. Consequently, this has been labeled "m" in **Fig. 2.10**. The

calligrapher measured his writing in order to create the appearance of regular and rhythmic calligraphy, and the painter, Dawlat, has taken up this rhythm and proportion for his own ends. The real meaning of the colophon is a celebration of the perfect cooperation between painting and calligraphy. The painting is a demonstration of the integration of calligraphy, painting, the human body, and objects in pictorial space in a system of proportions which is entirely appropriate for the apparent subject matter of the painting: the portraits of the two of most highly esteemed painters and calligraphers of the age, apparently and literally working together in harmony.[100]

A system of proportions may be traced in the Shah Jahan period also. In the *Padshah-nama* is a painting of the arrival of Prince Awrangzeb at the court in Lahore **Fig. 2.11**. The width of the throne canopy at its widest point, signaled with a white line and arrows, and the width of the inner canopy above it (in black) are the basic measurements echoed diagonally to create hexagons, and vertically and horizontally throughout the architectural and spatial divisions to create a mathematically proportionate and harmonious sense of order and precision. These measurements also dictate the distances between individuals.[101] There are many more mathematical principles at work in this painting, but suffice it to say here, these measurements are used for the distances between courtiers, the height of figures in the upper balcony area and the relationships between many lines, borders and focal points.

A key point in all this is the depiction of the body and its place in this system of proportions. In the European Renaissance tradition, ideal proportions govern both architecture and the human body.[102] In Mughal art the discovery that the depicted body can sometimes be subjected to a system of proportions that are integrated with the world of the page, margin, and book or indeed frame, might also suggest a similar philosophical grounding.[103]The integration of the mechanical arts of the book (the measurements between lines and margins, for example) and the image, and integrating painting and calligraphy in this way would have been pleasing to the eye and to the mind accustomed to perceive logical and cosmological harmonies. But most of all, this kind of proportioning provided a framework of intelligible precision guiding the artist away from the arbitrary in his work. It must have been a practice fostered by the tradition of the precisely measured rhythms of the calligraphy of the text and the measurements between various margins and headings. In this sense, these proportions and measurements provide for a refined visual aesthetic that values symmetry, geometry, and balance. These measurements may have gone unnoticed by viewers. Some measurements are not as precise as others are in these pictures. But the fact remains that the primary and dominant visual impression in later



2.11. *Prince Awrangzeb pays homage to the Emperor Shah Jahan in Lahore. The arrows show a module system of measured verticals and horizontals in the architecture and décor which correspond to courtiers' heights and the distance between them.*

Mughal painting is that of proportional relationships between the verticals of the figure and the framing margins and text blocks and the integration of various horizontal axes. A survey of Western illustrated manuscripts reveals no comparable system of proportions. In early Italian fresco painting, however, a system of relating the verticals of the human body with architecture (but which is by no means a system of proportions) has been studied. The human figure in Giotto, for example:

> […] is locked into an organic composition in which each by its predominant verticality and simplified contour, instantly relates itself alone and in groups, to the lateral limits of the compartment […] By the same principle the figures are deployed across its width in a continuity that brings them into harmony with the horizontal limits as well […] this approximates a regular geometric pattern which assumes its assimilation within the rectangular frame.[104]

These comments on Giotto are relevant considerations for the Shah Jahan period *Padshah-nama* illustrations, notwithstanding objections to the impossibility of direct influence between them. In late Mughal art, most of the painting continues this integration between the uprights of the figures and the pictorial frame. This integration suggests a non-naturalistic treatment of the human figure with which there is "no effort to catch the action on the wing."[105] in the formal court scenes in particular. The action is elsewhere: in the bedazzlement of geometrical and chromatic systems. In addition to this, the integration of the human figure with the frame in the *Padshah-nama*, alongside richly adorned surfaces and textiles which mirror the illuminators' art, brings that which lies outside of the picture frame into the depicted space. A fine and detailed system of rules in gold inks frame surmount and structure the internal pictorial space in what is obviously an integration of the margin rules of the art of the book with the depicted space itself. This integration, which emphasises the linearity of Mughal art, also accentuates stability and suggests that the imperial order is a world legitimised mathematically and indelibly.[106] Yet still, beyond this static vision there is room for escape into a myriad of other systems of visual order, to which we now turn our attention.

Colour and Pictorial Order

Art historians typically have not regarded the use of colour in Mughal painting as anything to do with pictorial order or aesthetics. Costumes, fabrics, furniture, carpets, and architecture are seen as simple depictions of objects in their historical settings with no awareness of the part these depictions play in the pictorial order of the painting. It is important, however, to see these objects as elements in a formal language, as a way of creating a desirable chromatic

structure in a painting. It is this abstract use of colours as qualia, disassociated from representation as such, and employed primarily as a vocabulary of aesthetic order that yields "the brilliant unearthly zones of an abstract cosmos."[107] The use of colour can form an entirely discrete object of inquiry, distinct from the depictions of the object, material, fabric or cultural product in which it appears to inhere. That colour was used accurately to depict types of garments, dyeing technologies, choices, and preferences cannot be denied, especially when such textiles and garments are extant, but what has been overlooked by art historians is the fact that the placement, juxtaposition of colours and by implication, planes, formed an aesthetic system in Mughal painting. Although Mughal art eventually developed its own chromatic aesthetic, a significant part of this remained indebted to Persian painting with references being made to Persian colouristic schemes as late as the Shah Jahan period. Colour and its arrangement are subject to a highly evolved sense of balance, variety, and order, which indicate that the primary function of colour in the Mughal miniature, as in the Persian, was to continue the tradition of pictorial order and to project ideal relationships.

In Mughal painting artists often repeated a colour, when depicting turbans worn by courtiers, for example, and placed these areas of color in distinct relationships to each other in the picture space in order to form triangles or squares and other geometric schemes. Thus, in addition to this use of geometry and proportion, which I have outlined above the manuscript's highly organised chromatic system interlocks with other design schemes such as flowering spiral scrolls, geometric strap work and interlaced cusped medallions to create larger and more intricate visual structures, revealing complex attitudes to the envisioning of space, power and narrative. Mughal artists produced a composite aesthetic response in their patrons, combining historical accuracy with idealising elements, both enhanced by the vivid and sensuous allure of color. Yet also provided for was a contemplative response, not so much centred on the colours and depicted objects themselves but in the arrangement of space between them. Patterns of both continuity and change communicate intelligible and deliberate balances, symmetries, and rhythms produced by colour relationships. The use of particular chromatic structures embedded in the depictions of the minutiae of daily life suggests that the Mughals valued both the power of observation and the ideals of abstract design.

Two important aesthetic aspects of colour in Mughal painting are both at once realisable: its sensuous allure and its intellectual placement. The most consistent use of colour in all periods allows Mughal miniatures to appear brilliantly lit, almost from within, to form an abstract environment, the continuum of light intensity afforded by colours of equal tone are contrasted or complemented in an elaborate anti-illusionist pictorial space. This kind of colour

use often admits no half tones, nor any changing intensities within any given hue.[108] Colour is a largely abstract pictorial element representing principles of design. Each figure dressed in a bright colour is a self-contained shape interacting with other shapes to form chromatic relationships that help to structure pictorial space. The saturated colours used so frequently in Mughal painting placed next to each other imply the total effect of shadowless world, an intense light, one without any particular source or direction but which appears equally distributed across the whole picture plane.[109] This reflects an internal pictorial coherence that is removed from the imitation of external reality.[110] This idealisation consists also of joining the sharpness of forms with the brilliance of colour to give the impression of optimum viewing conditions, whether these exist or not in the context of viewing the actual page. The brightness of colour is coupled with sharply delineated depictions of leaves or tesserae, for example, which never seem to diminish in clarity however far they are portrayed in the background. Even the adoption of atmospheric perspective for minor background details did not interfere with this primary visual effect. The absence of a single vanishing point and the equality of colour values across all pictorial planes, without the illusion of a single direction for light, disembodies the eye: it allows the viewer to get the distinct impression that he or she can be in several places at once, sometimes very close up with perfect lighting, that allows for precision viewing everywhere, in both depth and across the surface of any plane and sometimes projected deep onto an ideal horizon.

The visual rays or lines of movement suggested by figural arrangements in order to form identifiable patterns and relationships, like triangles, for example, are also suggested in relationships of colours in Mughal paintings, the ingenuity of these is explored below. Colour relationships often form a network or pattern and they help to increase the overall integrity of the general pictorial order. But these chromatic relationships, realised in the disguised shape and form of the minutiae of daily life, clothes, architectural features, mosaic, or dado tiles, also help form rhythms and counter rhythms achieved by a series of intervals and visual sequences. This highly organised, anti-illusionist chromatic system of abstract design interlocks with a highly artificial placement of figures, in the *Padshah-nama* especially, to form ever more complex and dynamic geometrical structures to delight the viewer interested in visual complexity. A large majority of Mughal cultural products from textiles, jewellery, arts of the book, to armour and architectural features, all suggest a love for this layering of visual experience. The power of this visual interplay of colour and surface pattern is attracts both sensuous appreciation *and* the kind of rational enquiry encouraged by intellectual figural and spatial organisation. The traditional opposition between *disegno* and *colore* in Renaissance art appears resolved in Mughal art.

Colour Symbolism

Before looking at some principles of colour in Mughal art, it is appropriate to deal at this juncture with the symbolism of colours in Persian and Mughal literature. There is no explicitly expressed systematic colour symbolism used in Mughal art apart from a few general cultural values associated with colours. Abu'l Fazl writes only a few lines about the general properties of colour in the *A'in-i Akbari* using theories based on ideas from Greek antiquity:

> White and black are believed to be the origin of all colours. They are looked upon as extremes, and as the component parts of the other colours […] other colours may be formed by compounding these […] cold makes a juicy substance white, and a dry body black; and heat renders that which is fresh black, and white that which is dry.[111]

Because atmospheric conditions and temperatures make colours changeable Abu'l Fazl assumes that these colours are inseparable from the forms or objects in which they inhere, which is entirely consistent with Aristotelian traditions. The result is that there is no reference to pigments at all, nor colour symbolism, yet the cosmological significance is evident in Abu'l Fazl's statement that white moderates black, one of the main origins of colours, which is considered to be dense and more composite than the purer white. This links white to the anagogic direction, lighter, less dense, while crude matter is associated with black, which is dense and impure with matter, and is of the earth. One would assume that a hierarchy of colours lies in the back of Abu'l Fazl's mind, given these two polar points on a cosmic scale.

Visual evidence for this hierarchy in Mughal art may be seen in a painting in the Shah Jahan Album in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin depicting a quiet scene of a musician, soldier and a dervish sitting under a tree. The picture shows the two uses of colour, muted, with subtle gradations for the background landscape, and stronger, clearer colour blocks for the individuals in the large margin area of the page. The colour distribution here loosely refers to an Islamic cosmological system of ordering colours, some of which have been described earlier and which are closely aligned to aesthetic preferences, with black at the bottom, followed by blue, yellow then pink (or sandalwood), then to the relatively elevated positions in this order for white, green and red at the top of the page. White is repeated at the top of the page on the left.

It is more than probable that traditional attitudes and responses to various colours were influenced by events described in the *Qu'ran*, where white, for example is represented as the colour of Gabriel's body, and the white bird is an

emissary sent by God to tell good news. These are no different from many cultural examples where white is equated with light. The Emperor Akbar is painted wearing clothes in various colours but white consistently in several manuscripts.[112] White ranks as the highest of all colours, even above green, in various Islamic cosmologies. Predictably, black as the opposite of white, has negative yet equally powerful connotations. The black stone of the *Kaaba* is a symbol of a powerful mystery. Black may have an attraction that is often to do with its lustrous nature (hair, eyes, black ink).[113] Closely related to black is blue in the *Qur'an*, which is used to describe the guilty ones on the last Day of Judgment and is thus associated with ruin. Colours are often taken from examples in nature: the immeasurable blue of the sky, a lighter blue, which is also infinitely cold and dead and thus further becomes associated with the colour of mourning and with extreme asceticism and withdrawal from the world.[114] As such, they are polar opposites from the positive and celebratory colours of animal life (red), and plant life (green). Blue is also a colour used to counter the evil eye (with a blue bead or earring, for example, in Mughal culture).

In the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami, a painting of *Shirin kills herself at Khusrau's tomb* depicts a majority of the figures dressed in blue and the curtains and carpet in the same colour increase the predominantly blue colour scheme, associated with mourning. A century before this a Persian mourning scene in another episode of the *Khamsa* is shown similarly with a blue colour scheme.[115] In addition to this, for the Persian Sufi orders, blue is a colour used often for the robes of shaykhs and scholars to show their acceptance of the transience of this world. A structural constant in many periods and styles in painting in Persia and in Mughal India is the use of blue and yellow as 'minor keys' compared to red and green, the major keys. This is borne out in illustrations from both traditions, as discuss below. In a large number of Persian and Mughal paintings, yellow as a form of dress is used sparingly, often only one character sporting this colour among many others. Yellow is the colour of the sun but also the colour of illness (the sight of the Angel of Death makes Adam turn a shade of this colour); it is also the colour of separation, loneliness and singularity[116]and this perhaps explains why the colour is used often as an isolated one, or sparingly among many others in Persian and Mughal painting.[117] It might also be noted here that the followers of the Chisthiyya Order, so closely aligned to the Mughal dynasty wore robes of a golden yellow colour, to signify their isolation from society.

A particular deep yellow colour known as *peori* is a yellow only found in India, and is made from the urine of cows fed exclusively on a diet of mango leaves. *Peori* allowed Mughal painters to add variety to a limited palette inherited from the Persians, where the yellow is of a paler kind. Both are used in the same pictorial space in Mughal art and as such, are to be viewed as

conceptually discrete. A wide variety of processed minerals and plants generally, termed 'gouache' were responsible for providing the colours found in Mughal art. Orpiment yellow, a highly toxic arsenic sulphide mineral was ground and processed; red or vermilion could be obtained with cinnabar (mercury sulphide), also highly toxic. Lapis lazuli, a semi-precious stone and cobalt, a hard, lustrous, silver-grey metal yielded shades of blue, while indigo, sometimes extracted from the plant *Indigofera tinctorium* gave various shades of blue and violet. Copper salts were used for viridian and lake for crimson (from the lac insect, *lakh* signifies 100,000 in Sanskrit, obviously many of them were needed for small quantities of that colour); other, deeper reds could be obtained from the common madder plant, *rubia tinctorum*, and a rich orange was obtained from the three fragrant stigmas of the Saffron plant, *crocus sativus*. Red, the colour of blood and human nature is also the colour of war and destruction. But emerald green (the colour of the soul and of the prophet) is also frequently shown side by side with red in both Persian and Mughal Indian illustrated manuscripts. Together they are often used as a potent mixture in Persian and Mughal art to distinguish the principal figures in the visual narrative, or alternatively in an encounter of two main figures, one in green the other red. In Islamic traditions green is the colour of the standard of the Prophet; the cloak of 'Ali and a colour associated with eternal youth and with the mythical figure Khizr, he who found and guarded the water of eternal life. Those who were purported to be descendants of the prophet wore green turbans in Mughal India. It is also a mystical colour of heaven when associated with the emerald from which the heavenly throne is carved. We have seen how this imagery was known to the Mughals with an carved emerald that survives with a verse from the Throne *sura* of the *Qur'an* inscribed upon it.

In tales of the prophet Muhammad's ascension, or *mi'raj*,[118] he is said to pass by the seven planets and bestows upon them their emblematic colours, turquoise (or green) for the moon, blue for Mercury, white for Venus, yellow for the sun, red for Mars, sandal (red-brown) for Jupiter and black for Saturn. This is repeated in the Nizami's *Haft Paykar* and the title of this work can mean both seven climes, pavilions (or domes, whence the idea of different heavens), or portraits in Persian; this is the fourth poem in Nizami's *Khamsa* but the colour symbolism here, although the same, is in a different order.[119] Even today in India and Pakistan, Nizami is revered and without doubt, the Mughals were even more aware of such colour associations. They produced several illustrated copies of Nizami's work and I have mentioned how Nizami was read aloud to the Emperor Akbar. The Emperor Humayun adopted an intricate court ceremonial based on concentric circles of different colours for different courtiers of the various *paykar* or climes; he used also to change the colours he wore according to different days of the week.[120] On Saturday, the day of Saturn, he

wore black, golden yellow on Sunday, white or green on Monday, red on Tuesday (Mars) blue on Wednesday, ochre on Thursday and white or green again on Friday.

Black in Nizami's *Haft Paykar* story represents lust and earthly desires, and bile the humor and earth the element, while white is the colour representing the apex of all others, the object of the quest and of spiritual perfection. Both these notions regarding black and white are entirely in agreement with Abu'l Fazl's underlying assumptions in the *Ain-i Akbari*. Yellow is associated with jealousy (fire/choleric) or the sun, which shines through untruths. Water, which figures centrally in the tale of the princess of the green dome (phlegmatic) is the inner life of the soul. Red is air/sanguine/Mars.

The hierarchy of colour in the prophet's ascent also deliberately informs the tale told in the seven domes or pavilions of Nizami. It also bears a relation to Najm al-Din Kubra (1145-1221) and his schema of seven colours used to denote the different levels of the universe: the world of Intelligence, (white); Spirit (yellow); Soul (green); Nature (red); Matter (ashen); Image (dark green); and Material Body (black). Another scheme originated by him associates light blue with certitude, red with gnosis and black with passion. There are many other Islamic philosophers and shaykhs who have used colours to think about and symbolise the fundamentals of the universe, and it is interesting to note that some of this great wealth of literature and thought has left traces in Mughal visual aesthetics.

Red and Green

A typical chromatic behaviour in Persian and Mughal Indian paintings is the balanced distribution of colours in pictorial space that creates a series of intervals between each incidence of the same colour. In other words, a structural constant, which must reflect the first aim of Persian and Mughal colorists, was to avoid the use of one colour or similar colours in two conjoined or contiguous areas or shapes. Everything is done to avoid this clash, usually by splitting up this colour with the use of others, or simply by painting figures clothed in primary colours then adding a pink or brown or similar half-tone or striped garment in the case of figures, to prevent the occurrence of the same colour side by side; primary colours are often used again on either side of this intervention in a different order. This is possibly the most common technique for paintings with many figures.

Reduced to essentials, the fundamental chromatic principle most consistently seen in the Persian and Mughal Indian miniature painting tradition is the interplay between green and red with a subordinate yellow and blue. These colours are used for the major figures in illustrations as surely as emeralds are

matched with ruby spinels in the Mughal jewellery tradition. They appear to represent polar opposites united in one instance for a dazzling effect. If the general consensus of symbolic colours outlined above are to be heeded in these cases, red and green represent the conjunction of nature (and blood, passion, war) with the soul (life, growth, gardens), respectively. Above all, the Mughals treasured spinels, which they described having the colour of pigeon blood.[121] A couplet from Sa'di's *Bustan*, praising God's creation in the mineral and plant kingdoms reads "He [God] places the ruby and the turquoise in the backbone of the rock/The red rose, on the branch of green colour." The red/green colour contrast in both kingdoms is seen as ideal. Yet another verse in the same vein, praises God for the treasures he places in things: "He brings thee a rose from the thorn, musk from the animal's navel, gold from the mine, and the green leaf from the dry wood" Both the rose (red) and the green leaf are complementary to each other, bringing forth beauty, health and life.[122] It is evident that a complex chain of semantic, poetic and aesthetic associations is attached to colour use. By the time of the Mughals many of these usages may have been forgotten, lapsing into painterly convention and the desire for striking effects, to draw the eye to the main figures, a service the interplay of red and green amply provides. But even these practices reveal consistent aesthetic preferences. The contrast of red and green is evident up to the end of the eighteenth century in Mughal art. Despite the fact that by this time many more colours and colour harmonies had been introduced, the use of green with red persists. The green in question does, however, vary from sage or olive green to an emerald colour, and the red from a scarlet or vermilion to magenta (but still matched with various greens). These colours are used in tight chromatic structures, usually as polar opposites with subordinate colours.

The underlying assumption of studies in the painting of Persian and Mughal Indian traditions is that colour use differs from painter to painter and is thus arbitrary and incalculable; this might especially seem so for the various many different local styles of Persian or Indian art. While this variety is undeniable, colour use conforms to broad structural principles that are part of a visual language of aesthetic order, especially so in the more stylistically uniform painting of the Mughals. These traditions show the viewing behaviours of artists able to observe various principles from the older paintings and to re-use them for their own. This cannot have escaped the most discerning of patrons, the Mughal emperors, princes, and princesses of the court.

As the archetypal colour contrast, the contrast of red and green is used consistently in Akbar period manuscripts often for creating focal points. This happens in battle scenes, in scenes of romance and in scenes calculated to show imperial power. The contrast may have been one considered appropriate in the portrayal of adversarial relationships and violence but it is more likely that the

red and green as a contrast was seen as the most eye catching colouristic device to use for the principal characters of a painting. In a painting of Akbar killing a tigress defending her offspring, the whole composition is an exercise in variations of this colour contrast.[123] Red and green are shown also in contexts of the duel. This is seen in the *Hamza-nama*[124]and the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi.[125] There are Persian precedents for this.[126] This dramatic contrast of red and green to create focal points is carried on in the *Padshah-nama* scene of the capture of Port Hoogly, many years later[127] and in the same manuscript, a gory battle scene of a commander of the Mughal imperial forces, Khan Dawran receiving the heads of traitors, the entire chromatic structure is a subtle interplay on many levels between greens and reds.[128] One can also note, in particular, the detail of the death of the Bundelas, which pits executor with executed in terms of red and green; this can be no accidental colour contrast but an example of how that manuscript follows traditional schemes.

Yet another structural constant in Persian painting followed by the Mughal Indian is the use of red and green for the passion of romance where two lovers, the principle figures, are picked out in red and green. Red and green, as in the examples of encounters between important personages is the ideal colour contrast for duality.[129] The colours have also been used consistently for the tragic lovers Layla and Majnun when they are together;[130] the two lovers in the story of Solomon and Absal from 1556-65;[131] paintings of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Bilquis in Islamic lore) and true also in paintings of the legendary lovers Humay and Humayun.[132] There is also a painting of Joseph (Yusuf) in green, for the soul and Zulaykha (Potiphar's wife) in red, for nature.[133] She is shown attempting to seduce him.[134] Sometimes, Yusuf, one of Islam's personifications of beauty, is seen in both red and green, as is the angel Gabriel, or Jibrail.[135] There are a significant number of paintings showing the beloved or the person who is beautiful and desirable in the story in both red and green,[136] qualities that may also extend to the association of red and green with royal effulgence and beauty.

Similar dialogues of colour are suggested in many paintings in the Akbar period with the depiction of lovers. In such cases, it is evident that what is being emphasised is an exciting or dramatic encounter articulated by the visually striking colour contrast of red and green, a relationship of colours which also has deep rooted cultural associations. They are individual colours that retain their discrete ontological power despite being juxtaposed, hence their ability to attract the eye to an unresolved binocular rivalry. They are polar opposites in duels yet complementary in romance; they articulate a fundamental bilateral symmetry. Other examples of this use of red and green are detailed in appendix 1.

Yellow and Blue

There is a structural constant in the way that yellow and blue are used for the figures in Mughal paintings, that is, sparingly. As red and green form major keys of a favourite colour contrast, yellow and dark blue are reduced in use and are minor keys in several Persian periods[137] and in Mughal Indian paintings. Yellow is often used as a minimised or isolated colour in Persian art.[138] Even if it were to be established that this is only a statistical occurrence due to a limited number of colour choices available, one would still have to take seriously the structural pattern: red/green (major) versus yellow/blue (minor) in both painting traditions.[139] A reversal of this principle would give Mughal painting in its various periods an entirely different appearance. The use of dark blue in Persian painting is restricted largely to depict dervishes, holy men, prophets, old women and mourners[140] (the tragic lover Majnun is often depicted wearing a blue cloth in Persian art and this is continued in the Mughal period[141]), or otherwise, more sparingly than red and green. In such cases, blue is used as an element associated with spiritual withdrawal from the sensuous world of nature and the soul. There appears to be no comparable semantic use of yellow, yet its reduced usage may indicate some knowledge of its associations with loneliness and disease. In Mughal painting, this very particular restricted use of blue and yellow for the figures continues. Blue, however is used even less often than in Persian art and yellow is often used as a solitary colour, as the odd one out to set off the arrangement of the other colours and to imply a naturalistic arbitrariness to disguise deliberate and careful colour placements. Although this may seem like a point of minor significance, the traditional use of colour dating from Persian precedents in Mughal art shows an awareness of chromatic conventions and implies a shared and highly structured visual aesthetic, as well as the Mughal artists' highly observant visual analysis of Persian art. If a colour has to be repeated because there are many elements in a picture and because in both Persian and Mughal Indian painting colours should always be varied and not be the same next to each other, blue and yellow were seldom used to obtain this variety. There are numerous examples of yellow and blue being used more than once in paintings but in Mughal art, these are always as minor keys unless this does not clash with an imperative from the narrative (Bahram Gur in the blue pavilion in the *Haft Paykar*, for example) and there are a significant number of paintings in both traditions that reduce the use of yellow and blue.

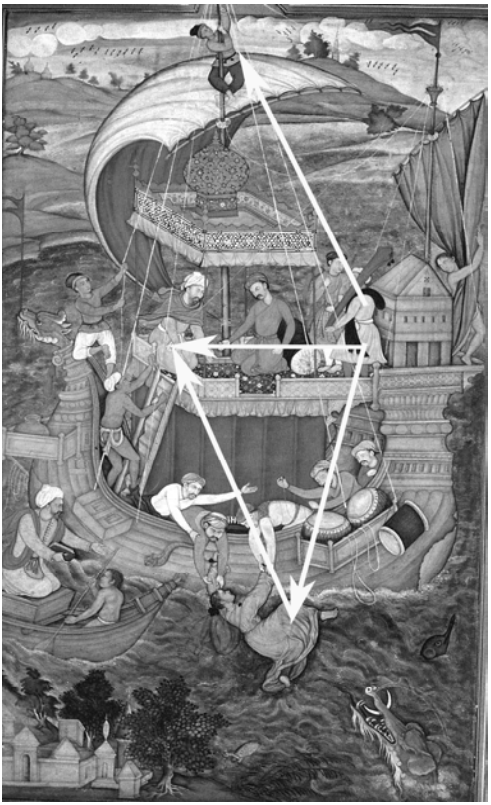
In a painting of a prince visiting a holy man from a *Diwan* of Shahi, the holy man is dressed in blue (with a yellow overcoat) and in the retinue, only one of the courtiers is seen clearly wearing yellow.[142] A dervish is also dressed in blue in a painting by Basawan of Abu'l 'Abbas Qaukub rebuking another dervish[143]

and in another painting of his showing a Muslim pilgrim in blue with a yellow cloak.[144] The use of blue as an isolated colour for figures in pictorial space is another structural constant in Mughal art.[145] When more than one blue does appear it is to signal a tragic occasion of some kind. Apart from the examples given above, there is also the painting of an aggrieved mother dressed in dark blue who has witnessed the death of her son in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi; in the *Padshah-nama,* the restriction of blue is extremely consistent.[146]

As for the reduced use of yellow in Mughal painting this is consistently observed in the *Hamza-nama*,[147] frequently in the Victoria and Albert *Akbar-nama* and in copies of the *Babur-nama*[148] and in some pages of the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, [149] although some pages buck the trend. In the painting of Akbar ordering the death of Adham Khan in the *Akbar-nama* the dominant red green colour contrast subordinates yellow and blue[150] as this is so in the *Akbar-nama* painting of the birth of prince Murad. In a Mughal painting of a crucifixion scene based on a European print one of the ways of telling that the colouring is purely Mughal in taste[151] is that, of all the many colours employed, yellow is used only once, blue more often for mourning (Christ is shown wearing this on the cross). Many other examples from a wide range of Mughal paintings show that yellow is the minor key–even if used more than once. Apart from others in the Jahangir period, one of the most obvious examples of this isolation of the yellow is the painting of the ceremony of the weighing Prince Khurram, with a courtier to the right dressed in yellow while there are many areas of red and green contrasts, not least that between the turbans of the emperor and the prince, which are green and red respectively.[152] This use of yellow as a minor key continues in the Shah Jahan period in the *Padshah-nama* paintings.[153] Several other paintings from this manuscript conform to the conventional use of yellow as a minor key.[154] A majority of the artists involved in the painting of this manuscript had a colour hierarchy that placed green at the top in terms of frequent usage then red, yellow, and blue.

Geometry and Colour Placement

Mughal artists could repeat a colour in a painting to create rhythms, intervals, and geometric relationships. A common chromatic tradition was to indicate triangles or squares in the picture space. There was also a rational, geometrical system of coupling colours that helped to structure the pictorial space. The introduction of a rose or pink colour (*gulabi*) in the late Akbar period is frequent right up until the eighteenth century. In *The Chinese princess thrown into the Tigris*, 1596-97, **Fig. 2.12**, a triangular pattern is created by three blocks of *gulabi* two by the robes of attendants on either side of the central character and the third by the robes of the Chinese princess.



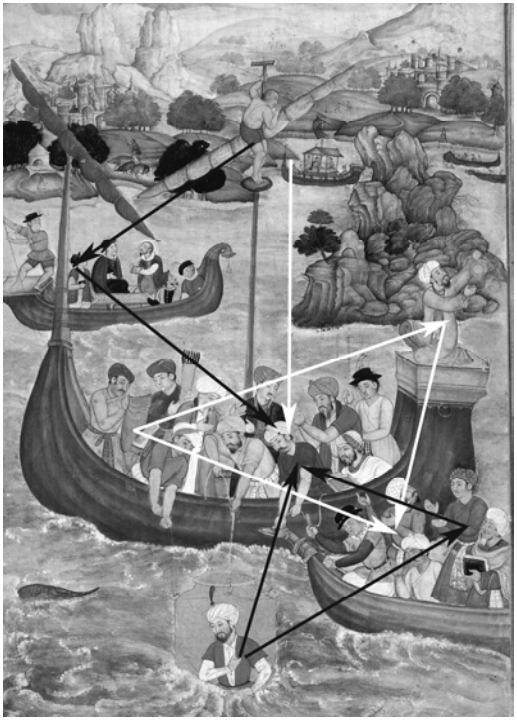
2.12. *The Chinese princess thrown into the Tigris*

She is thrown into the Tigris as a form of execution by the king whom she enchanted, so much so that he neglected the affairs of state. This composition emphasises a downward movement focusing on the fall of the princess into the sea. The vizier above, also dressed in the same colour pink, is charged to do the king's bidding. The king himself at the centre of the picture strongly resembles Akbar, who perhaps desired to show himself as the master of destiny over passion and desire and his duty to the state.

The blocks of pink which connect all the servants of the king are accompanied by green in each instance; the deliberate colour placement creates a strong downward pointing triangle. In addition, a figure dressed in pink or *gulabi* may be seen perched at the very top of the picture on the mast. This creates another symmetrical triangular area above, linking the lower actions of

the sublunary world with the celestial, as with so many Mughal paintings. The strategy of colour placement by the artist Miskina alerts us to the largely symmetrical and triangular figural arrangements used to structure the whole picture. The ropes used to hoist up the sails provide clear sight lines, as do the arms of the figures trying to hoist up the princess from the sea. The sightlines alert the viewer to organisational principles in the different registers of the painting above and below.

A complex colour triangulation is evident in the painting of *Iskandar lowered into the sea in a diving bell*, **Fig. 2.13.** Aristotle, in his *Problemata*, tells the tale of Alexander the Great lowered in a diving bell. As a test of faith and to explore the submarine realm, Iskandar is lowered into the sea for a hundred days.



2.13. *Iskandar lowered into the sea*

The artist, Mukund, created a complex triangular structure by coupling pink and green in three places, just as they are coupled in the previous painting, he

repeats this in three areas to create the central triangle shown with white arrows (there are two extensions for other pinks in the distance and foreground to create a lozenge). This brings the astrologer into the play of the narrative (helped by the figure in the small boat, dressed also in green and pink, who gazes up to him). Three oranges (one of them redder, but still the visual triangle is dominant) form the bottom, smaller triangle shown with black arrows. The overall effect is to unite different focal points of the painting within an intelligible pattern. The ten figures on the boat are divided neatly into two groups of five by the main mast. In the smaller boat, five figures are arranged in a circle. The boat in the distance is brought into the action not only by the fore sail of the boat which points to the main action, but also, the main sail points to this boat in the distance, and the look out on top of the sail is shown in red, which coordinates with the other reds and oranges beneath. Again, this interconnection brings together the different parts of the painting aesthetically. The arrangement of figures, enhanced by the interconnectedness of the colour arrangement, creates a strong relationship of high to low in a series of registers. This visual stratification, as with the previous examples, cooperates with a view of the world structured as a hierarchy of beings and intelligences, the subterranean or submarine realm being the lowest, the highest symbolised by the man suspended in the air on the top of the mast, above the line of the earth shown in the background.

For other examples of geometrical colour placement and for other observations on the use of colour, see the appendices.

Conclusions

Although the various principles of organising pictorial space of different kinds in Mughal painting are not seen everywhere in Persian and Mughal art, and there are often occasions when they are abandoned, they do demonstrate, across a broad variety of painting periods and manuscript types, a similar tradition of deliberating carefully over the relationships of figures and the distribution of colours in a picture to create harmony, order and rhythm. This not only reflects the objectives of an aesthetic system which was hinted at long before the Mughals in Islamic cultural traditions[155] but also, evidence of a system reveals deliberate method, and this in turn reveals complex viewing behaviours shared by artists and viewers. For the viewer who habitually reads the pictorial order of a painting in terms of figural relationships, this mode of viewing may become a primary rather than secondary concern; indeed, the subject matter of painting can become its pictorial order.

Painting is not just about representing the world purely 'as it is'.[156] Nature is ordered in painting by aesthetic principles of geometry and proportion.[157] This has been clearly recognised in European art also, where E. H. Gombrich for example, states:

> […] the more a painting or statue mirrors natural appearances, the fewer principles of order and symmetry will it automatically exhibit. Conversely, the more ordered a configuration, the less will it be likely to reproduce nature.[158]

If order would spoil the illusion of life, in the Mughal context one wonders whether this was a result of a blatant and perhaps deliberate disregard for such an illusion. Yet, perhaps deeper than this is the fundamental conception in Mughal art that nature and the visible world is structured by rational, divine principles of order which are reflected or acknowledged in pictorial art. Geometrical principles are evolved from this intuited (and often rationally defended) conception and the artist structures and orders the external world according to rational and sometimes, intuitive aesthetic procedures. Rather than primarily recording the raw, external world of disassembled objects, Mughal art stylises it and creates a system of intelligible relationships. In this way, the artist implicates his belief in the order of the universe, in a pictorial universe, which is rationally and aesthetically ordered.

This intelligible order, which I have likened to a visual language, is structured by the Mughal vision of the universe, and in a sense, it *is* the Mughal universe.[159] If patterns, forms, and structures are seen in the potential chaos of external reality, Mughal miniatures provide a recording of the desire to rationalise them. But these recordings must be dialectical: they record the mind perceiving forms and order in nature but they also show the viewer how to see these forms in nature. Mughal painting strengthens and re-presents the intellectual envelope around nature.[160] The essential mechanism on which this ordering process relies is the interplay between internal mental image, *a priori*, ordering categories (something that can emerge from reading a description in a book, for example), and views of the external world, or of nature. This mechanism is obviously very important in our understanding of the interplay between Mughal book illustration and the mental image created in the mind of the reader by textual description. These are two different ways of "seeing", one to do with the "external senses" governed by the optical experience of what the eye observes and identifies in terms of simple, represented objects, and the second to do with the "internal senses", with understanding and analysing the geometry and proportion of the painted image.[161] The internal senses perceive not the disassembled, individual objects of sense perception but the rational and aesthetic order brought to mind by relationships that are suggested by placement, repetition, balance, symmetry and asymmetry, contrast and rhythm.

The traditional forms of composition and colour relationships analysed in this chapter build upon previous accretions of taste, semantic content and artistic and technical solutions, which are reinvigorated and modified through re-use. Within this tradition of pictorial order, improvisation and innovation may be seen. But the visual language of Mughal miniatures displays habitual notions of order and appropriateness shared with older Persian pictorial traditions. Mughal artists must have acquired this sense of pictorial order either by training at an early stage (and therefore these rules of colour use had become a second nature shared by all, including viewers) or, it is the result of following a respected tradition from the Persian, relayed to the Mughal studio-scriptorium through sketches, visual memory, oral traditions, through the presence of Persian educated supervisors and the presence also of earlier Mughal and Persian manuscripts in the imperial library. Scholars have discussed how Mughal artists may have had access to earlier manuscripts to continue this tradition.[162] Yet it has been suggested that there are no major stylistic similarities that Mughal paintings share with the Persian because access to older paintings was limited.[163] But this may be because geometric and chromatic structures are overlooked in an assessment of stylistic comparisons, because scholars may be looking for more obvious similarities between paintings rather than formal and structural characteristics.

It has been observed that manuscripts repeat or recycle "types"[164] but this artistic practice presumes knowledge of types innate in the consciousness of the artist or learnt from a perusal of earlier paintings. Indeed, the practice of re-using types must have encouraged the transmission of the kind of compositional and chromatic schemes outlined here. The pursuit of a compositional structure or palette inspired by naturalist or illusionist motives seems to have been less important than working within known conventions. In addition to this, Shah Jahan's painters followed traditions established in Persian painting traditions perhaps as much as their orders from the emperor. This modifies the view that Shah Jahan was an overwhelmingly powerful force in the visualisation of his court history. It is probable that a combination of these factors allowed for the continuity of structural principles of geometry and chromatic balance outlined in this chapter. One must also mention that part of this pictorial order was second nature, reflecting cultural responses to social rank and space and other mental categories and distinctions. In a majority of miniatures of court scenes and historic events, the lower social divisions of society, when represented, rarely occupy the central and upper spaces of paintings, they are usually left out (beyond the margin) or occupy space furthest away from the center and both off-centre, and usually below the main action. This is usually shown as an elaboration of the old traditions of organising pictorial space in registers. The

hexagonal compositional form, much like the radial form is designed as a way to focus and elevate the power of the centre.

In the absence of any written evidence showing an awareness of principles of pictorial order in Mughal texts one might conclude that the geometrical organisation of pictorial space in Mughal art aims intuitively for unity, beauty and aesthetic effect, rather than the reinforcement of narrative readings. The former proposition suggests that geometrical design was second nature; the result of an intuitive and ingrained process of design, while the idea that the geometric figural relationships and spatial arrangements reinforce the narrative structure presumes an element of deliberation and awareness. I would argue that in some cases or with some artists, the idea that geometrical arrangement was an unthinking reflex was possibly truer than for others. As I have shown here, there are numerous examples where geometrical planning appears to elucidate the narrative content of a painting, or at least be in harmony with it. Because of the range of possible artistic intellectual practices (some artists and viewers being more or less intellectual than others) one has to conclude that there was no one right way to read these paintings (or to construct them) and that one has legitimately to ponder over alternate values and interpretations (and levels of the intellect) that do not reduce viewing behaviours to one kind of explanation or formula. Oleg Grabar appears to have come to similar conclusions about the geometry of surfaces in Islamic art:

> The visible geometry on surfaces may be more or less what it is in architecture – that is to say, a means to compose that satisfies at the same time a great number of impulses, and of practical and psychological needs […] Being rational and rationable, it is also a way toward one or more harmonies of proportions and thus either the reflection or the illustration of some mathematical and philosophical ideal or the most attractive way to grasp a viewer's or user's attention because of the immediate recognition most of us have of geometric shapes. Within any one of these conceptual domains well studied in architecture, geometrical ornament or geometry in ornament would simply be either an organising principle for something else or a convenient way toward perceiving something else, at times both.[165]

Grabar's perception of Islamic geometry was that it satisfied "a great number of impulses, and of practical and psychological needs." And that it was an attractive way "to grasp a viewer's or user's attention because of immediate recognition." I have already dealt with one of the essential characteristics of Mughal painting, that it allows for and satisfies a multiplicity of viewing choices in a range from naïve enjoyment to a sophisticated, dynamic geometrical awareness.[166] But there is much more in Mughal art that fascinates and attracts the viewer. The ways in which Mughal painting meets the psychological needs

of the viewer and provides immediate recognition in order to do so are discussed in the next chapter.

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[1] See Marie Timberlake and Andean art, she writes "Many previous scholars who have examined colonial Andean paintings have interpreted them from a strictly Western representational perspective and have failed to detect the underlying Andean structures embedded within their compositions […] colonial writers have viewed the forced adoption of a Western figural style as constituting erasure of Andean semiotic structures." Marie Timberake, *The Painted Image and the Fabrication of Colonial Andean History*, 34. For issues to do with European conceptions of Chinese art see, Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, 9-13. Because African art has often been approached from the perspective of anthropological studies, its art history is consequently much less Euro-centric. For this, and a broader view of how the art history of non-Western cultures has developed into analysis of the cognitive operations involved in the production and reception of images, see John Mack, *Art and Memory in World Cultures, The Museum of the Mind* with a useful bibliography.

[2] See Papadopoulo "[…] a tree, a house, a garment any object whatsoever cannot claim the right to exist within the pictorial space simply because it exists *de facto* within real space. It must justify its right to aesthetic existence, must acquire an existence that is, so to speak, *de jure*. And that right can be proved only if it conveys an impression of autonomous necessity with the whole, if the form and colours convince the eye that they belong precisely in that place." A. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 103.

[3] Gülru Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and Humanities, 1996), 219.

[4] This may be traceable to seventeenth century reactions against geometrical schemata in painting in *Du Fresnoy's Quae fugienda in Distributione & Compositione* we read: "Avoid also […] Geometrical figures; such as are Squares and Triangles: all of which by being too exact give to the Eye a certain displeasing Symmetry" Quoted in Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 267. This would of course necessarily put most of Mughal painting into a negative light, but also the work of Raphael. See the "contrived" symmetries of his *Canigiani Madonna*, 1507, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, publ. Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, pl. 1.

[5] Some Western art historical approaches identifying geometrically inspired visual order are Theodore Hetzer, *Giotto, Seine Stellulng in der europäischen Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main, 1960). See also, Charles Bouleau, *The Painter's Secret Geometry: A Study of Composition in Art* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963). The author examines the organisation of pictorial space into registers, and geometrical patterns, some of which are obvious, 100, 121 and others over-determined. In such cases, rather complex networks are superimposed over well-known paintings, sometimes without regard to more subtle pictorial schemes. Similarly, this work was continued by Brian Thomas, *Geometry in Pictorial Composition* (Newcastle: Oriel Press, 1969) with the idea that many paintings in art history have proportional relationships between the figures and the frame, or the shape of the canvas. Other works on compositional formulae are Rudolf Arnheim *Art and Visual Perception, A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) and *The Power of the Centre: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). See also, Richard Fichtner, *Die verborgene Geometrie in Raffaels »Schule von Athen«* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1984). Roger Fry described Raphael's *Transfiguration* in terms of visual order. He wanted viewers to imagine that they could not understand the Christian imagery and so isolate the communicative power of the visual order. He suggested the viewer might understand it in a purely formal sense: "Let us now take for our spectator a person highly endowed with the special sensibility to form, who feels the intervals and relations of forms as a musical person feels the intervals and relations of tones, and let us suppose him either completely ignorant of, or indifferent to the Gospel story. Such a spectator is likely to be immensely excited by the extraordinary power of coordination of many complex masses in a single inevitable whole, by the delicate equilibrium of many directions of line." Quoted in E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods. A Critical Anthology* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1995), 165. Like Fry in his analysis of the *Transfiguration*, the French art historian Focillon argued that forms (elements of the visual order) were fundamentally abstract in nature, even in the most representational works such as *The School of Athens* where the human figures are described as garlands and interlace patterns. "The mathematicians in the *School of Athens*, the soldiers in the *Massacre of the Innocents*, the fishers in the *Miracles of the Fishes*, Imperia seated at the foot of Apollo or kneeling before Christ—all these are the successive interlaces of a formal thought composed of and supported by the human body, and by means of which are contrived symmetries, *contrapposto*s and alternating rhythms." Quoted in Fernie (173). It is remarkable that this observation has never been applied to Mughal period painting.

[6] Quoted in Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 101.

[7] Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Composition*, 175. The link between the two traditions is Aristotle.

[8] Roxburgh, 'Prefacing the Image', 199.

[9] Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 87-108.

[10] Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 87.

[11] A. Petruccioli, *Fatehpur Sikri* (Berlin: Ernst and Sohn, 1992), 7.

[12] From the *Tarikh-i- Qandahari*, in M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri, A Sourcebook*, (Camb. Mass., Harvard Universtiy and MIT, 1985), 56.

[13] For these poetic metaphors see S. Melikian-Chirvani 'From the Royal Boat to the Beggar's Bowl', 3-111.

[14] In other words, while *tarh* is a series of graphic outlines of figures and objects etc., it may also be essentially a working out of figural relationships beyond the poses conveyed by these graphic outlines. *Tarh* is then more about proportional and geometrical archetypes, not merely the representationalism of the *tarh* outlines themselves. Roxburgh writes "Dust Muhammad theorises that Persian depiction is a history of inherited graphic outlines or a series of archetypes refined and perfected in the course of a visual tradition." Roxburgh, 'Prefacing the Image' (199), One wonders whether this inheritance is the graphic outlines of the figures or the schematic relationships between them or their own geometric basis. Roxburgh also suggests that *tarh* (or graphic outlines) were viewed as archetypes or ideas in Persian art: "The objective of the visual archetypes was to cut through or see past the appearance of the visible and to make a distillation of essential properties that would parallel heaven's hidden or veiled archetypes, just as writing does."

(199). This suggests that the graphic outlines are less the archetype than the conceptual relations between them which are difficult to see but do "cut past appearances" and the relationship to writing mentioned in this passage must surely mean another "visual archetype" cutting through appearances: and that is proportion, which regulates rhythm and appearances and geometrical patterns.

[15] See Abu'l Fazl whose writing is deeply influenced by light imagery and cosmology: "Oh bestower of effulgence! What sort of light is there which thou has given to the world illuminating Sun? (Akbar) What sort of benevolence has prompted thee to depute the Great Luminary to educate the Great Khalifah (Akbar)" S. A. Abbas Rizvi, *Religious an Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's* Reign, 359.

[16] This was first discovered by Papadopoulo: "from the purely structural standpoint faces and, accessorily, hands constitute the only stable forms and colours in the entire art of the miniature […] As such, they provide firm points by which to anchor and outline the geometrical structures that always underlie pictorial organisation" Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 103. Although this is an important point, Papadopoulo ignored other possible devices artists used to indicate spatial composition, such as the edges of fences, architectural details, pavilions etc.

[17] Both Baxandall and Puttfarken miss the point about the Renaissance writer Landino's statement praising Filipo Lippi's Barbadori altarpiece in Paris and Donatello's *Assumption of the Virgin* in Naples. It is not the vague idea that Landino, in the Renaissance context, praises them both because of their symmetrical compositions but because they have ingeniously contrived to recreate the *mandorla* form wholly appropriate for representations of the Virgin with new and original elements that only imply the *mandorla*, not overstate it. See Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Composition*, 57. Despite the absence of programmatic statements about composition in this book, it is clear that Puttfarken has overlooked a very strong compositional tradition of organising the pictorial space most apposite for representing the Virgin with the *mandorla* form in Botticelli's *Primavera* (fig. 33) and *The Birth of Venus* (fig. 34); Fra Bartolommeo's *Worship of Venus* (fig. 35); Mantegna's *Madonna della Vittoria* (fig. 82) and several times in Raphael's work: the *Sistine Madonna* (fig. 17); *Madonna di Foligno* (fig. 55). One might also add David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women* to this, where it has been argued that his mirror, supplied to enhance certain compositional conceits, was an oval shape, referring to the *mandorla*, which was meant to isolate the figure of the mother, giving her a saintly aura, in her heroic act of beseeching Roman and Sabine to lay down their arms (fig. 165). David's stroke of genius is also to have implied the crucifixion in her gesture.

[18] Puttfarken, *Theories of Composition*, 72.

[19] See H. Knížkóva and J. Marek, *The Jengiz Khan Miniatures*, pl. 22.

[20] Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 122.

[21] An observation based on the study by Mikail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rostel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973).

[22] See a rare black marble pestle and mortar c. 1600, Bidar, used by miniature painters to mix paints carved into a hexagonal shape and with a lid of *cloisons* for the colours once ground together (also six in number) with a design of two paint brushes on either side. The pestle is of hexagonal section. Christies sale catalogue, *Islamic Art, Indian*

Miniatures, Rugs and Carpets Including Property from the Dr. Arthur M. Sackler Collection, Tuesday, 18 October, 1994, Lot 81, 238.

[23] See a Shah Jahan period painting of Firdausi in discussion with other scholars. Ellen S. Smart, 'Balchand' in Pal, *Master Artists*, fig. 6.

[24] *Persian and Indian Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Sotheby's, London, Tuesday 23rd April, 1996), Lot 7, 7.

[25] Hexagons in architecture at Fatehpur Sikri in the *baradari*, with a seat of the holy man, a structure of the southern wall of the *Diwan-i Amm*. A pattern of hexagons may also be seen in conjunction with stars on the ceiling of a chamber in the Turkish Sultana's House. See Koch, *Mughal Architecture. An Outline of Its History and Development 1526-1828* (Munich: Prestel, 1991), fig. 43.

[26] For example, see Abu'l Fazl presenting a book in the Chester Beatty *Akbar-nama*, publ. Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 11 and in the Victoria and Albert *Akbar-nama, Raja Shuja' Hada Handing Akbar the Keys to Ranthanbhor Fort*, Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 14, but also as late as 1631 in a posthumous portrait by Bichtr where he is shown handing the crown to Shah Jahan, see Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 32.

[27] Babur is shown seated on a hexagonal throne receiving the Ambassador of Bengal in the British Library *Babur-nama*, Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 13.

[28] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 56.

[29] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 18 in the *Chingis Khan-nama.*

[30] In the Kervorkian Album in the Metropolitan Museum New York, a painting of a shaykh shows him seated on a dais decorated with hexagons and six-pointed stars (55.212.10, f. 26).

[31] An hexagonal emerald of 234 carats from the Kuwait National Museum (present location unknown) was carved with a bevelled edge and with several unusual palm trees so as to appear as an oasis; see A. Fullerton, and G. Féhérvari, eds., *Kuwait, Arts and Architecture: a Collection of Essays* (Kuwait, 1995), 23. Another hexagonal pendant, around 250 carats is decorated with rosettes in flowing lines and has rounded corners V.B. Meen, and A. D. Tushingham, *The Crown Jewels of Iran* (Toronto, 1968),122. Yet another hexagonal carved emerald of 161.20 carats features similar rosette designs and is said to be seventeenth century north Indian, Christies Sale Catalogue, *Magnificent Mughal Jewels* (London, Wednesday, October 6, 1999,162). The 'Taj Mahal' emerald c. 1630-50, also hexagonal, weighs 141.13 carats with a typical Mughal style of carving, with smooth, flowing lines in the design of intersecting petals and with and a highly polished surface, see Pal, *Romance of the Taj Mahal* (London and Los Angeles, 1989), 141. A well published carved emerald weighing 217.8 carats, dated 1107 A. H. equivalent to 1695-96, also has a flower carved into the surface and with the grille design at the centre, see S. C. Welch, *India Art and Culture*, 273. This piece has inscribed on it the twelve names of the *imam*s, a common *Shi^{c}a* formula. Another hexagonal pendant, around 250 carats is of a much later date of 1811-12 and is carved with an inscription praising the Persian ruler Fath 'Ali Shah (1771-1834) showing that the Qajars were also expert emerald carvers, see Meen, *Crown Jewels*, 122.

[32]The emerald is published in Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 181. The whole inscription on it reads: "Allah! There is no God but He, the Living, the Self-

subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there that can intercede in his presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the supreme (in Glory)." Al-Baqara (2):255.

[33] Dated 1629. See Seyller, 'Hashim', in Pal, *Master Artists*, 114.

[34] See also a painting by Abu'l Hasan, where Prince Khurram is seen holding up an hexagonal ornament. Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 215. Jahangir is shown wearing a hexagonal emerald in an album painting c. 1618-20 by Hashim, now in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 7 (13), publ. John Seyller, 'Hashim' in Pal, ed., *Master Artists*, 113.

[35] See Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, 180.

[36] Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pl. 34, who mentions that the left hand side is a loose triangular composition, which is also evident but not at the expense of other geometrical possibilities.

[37] The figure in green in the illustration on the right completes a hexagonal figural arrangement of the miniature on the page on the left hand side. The structure is reinforced by the alternation of dominant greens and blues.

[38]Other examples are *Young Man Amongst Elders* c. 1482, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, no. 424; *Sa'di and the Youth of Kashgar*, from a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, Art and History Trust, Lichtenstein; *Layla and Majnun at School, Khamsa* BL, Add. 25,900, f. 110v.

[39]British Museum, Or. 6810.

[40]British Library, Or. 2265. See ff. 48b, 57b, 60b, and 66b. For reproductions of these, see Stuart Cary Welch, *Persian Painting: Five Royal Safavid Manuscripts of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1976), pls. 54-59. In Or. 2265 three later Persian miniatures were added in 1675, it was thus probable that the manuscript was not in Akbar's library, unless it was taken back to Iran from there at some later stage.

[41] See Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art from the Arther M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museum* (Harvard University Art Museums, Camb. Mass., 2002), cover illustration.

[42] Others signal some awareness of this. In the description of a painting from a mid-sixteenth century Persian painting from *Jami*'s *Haft Awrang* Eleanor Sims writes, "The rulings of the picture, define, more or less, the interior spaces of the *hammam.*" Eleanor Sims with Boris I. Marshak and, Ernst J. Grube, *Peerless Images, Persian Painting and its Sources* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 200, referring to pl. 111. However, the author has overlooked a far more rigorous integration of proportions of text rulings and pictorial space.

[43] Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 94, fig. 67.

[44] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 173.

[45] For numerous examples, see Rochelle L. Kessler 'In the Company of the Enlightened: Portraits of Mughal Holy Men' in Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art*. A hexagonal format is also apparent in fig. 7, *Dara Shikoh with Sages.*

[46] Abu'l Fazl's phrase echoes a long tradition in Islamic cultures; the imagery is used as far back as Abu Hayyab al-Tawhidi (d. after 1009-1020), who uses the same term. See Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 189. The idea that painting is a form of spiritual geometry may refer to the spatial organisation of a picture. The same sentiment may also be traced in the poetry of Nizami, whose *Khamsa* occupied a very high place in Mughal culture, as his work was illustrated by the Mughal artists more times than any single work by any other author: "For when the seven lines converge, one point at centre shall emerge. The painter, ten designs in hand, of one main thread yet grasps the end; if that thread from the line should stray, the other would be sent awry". Quoted in Julie Meisami, *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 12. She writes: "Nizami's reference to 'lines and points' asserts the principle that 'intellectual geometry' provides the means of passing from material to spiritual understanding." Meisami *Haft Paykar*, xxvi. The verse implies that the constant essence of geometrical and proportional principles run through the vast diversity of images available to the artist. Geometrical design, used also in painting, can also be likened to the correct spiritual path, a journey with obstacles and challenges but a path to perfection, never straying from the narrative or line, which becomes imperfect in doing so and therefore creating imperfect shapes. The significance of the Nizami's poetry here is the use of geometry as a metaphor for a spiritual journey and the coherence of poetic form, yet one that is associated also with painting "ten designs in hand", and further: "I follow this thread, painter-wise". The lines and points of the painter represent geometrical principles that reflect celestial archetypes, traced out on earth through our various works of art. For another poet, Sana'i, spiritual illumination was possible only after approaching the understanding of a geometrician: "You only see with your imagination and your senses / when you have not learned about lines, planes and points". Meisami *Haft Paykar*, xxvi. "Like astronomy, the purpose of whose study is to purify the soul and instil in it the desire for celestial ascent, geometry leads to an understanding both of human justice and divine wisdom; it is no coincidence that these two sciences are those that Bahram devoted himself during his early education." Meisami *Haft Paykar*, xxvi.

[47] Such a symmetry is also experienced in the Christian "on earth, as it is in heaven".

[48] A . Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 100-105

[49] A similar criticism has been raised by others: "It seems to me that Papadopoulo allotted too much importance to the spiral, thereby neglecting other possible structures." Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh, the "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 143.

[50] A. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, figs. 588-589. The manuscript is in the Bibliothèque National, Paris (Sup. Pers. 985, ff. 40v and 41r).

[51] This may also be said of a painting by Muhammad Zaman of Fitneh carrying a bull on her shoulders (Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*), fig. 602 (British Library, Or. 2265, f. 213v) another six-pointed star composition that is shown as a spiral form by the author. The spiral is linked to secret wisdom by the author who suggests that this rather precise and mathematically complex form is evident in Persian art because of a tradition of esoteric knowledge maintained by generations of artist-initiates of a secret guild, 100. Apparently artists also regarded this secrecy as an act of clandestine defiance in order to circumvent the strict interpreters of the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet) that forbid

(illusionist) painting. Strangely, however, this only serves to imply that these interpreters of the *hadith* were themselves extremely scrupulous and pedantic in their picture viewing habits to have presaged so many veils of secrecy. And yet elsewhere the author suggests that the spiral and the arabesque were used because they are "more harmonious than other forms and therefore more likely to give maximum beauty, musicality and mathematical perfection" 97—incongruously bland justifications for secrecy and subversion even when these are coupled with the highly improbable suggestion that the spiral is an esoteric form representing the "religious, mystical and alchemical movement of the *circumnambulatio* of the *temenos.*" 102.

[52]Papadopoulo. *Muslim Art*, 102.

[53] See *Akbar's Entry into the Fort at Ranthambhor* where there is a dominant 'S' curve that unite top with bottom. A spiral is also evident in *Akbar Receiving His Sons at Fatehpur* and in *An Attempt on Akbar's Life* in Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor* pl. 27, where in both cases it serves the function of creating concentric layers of heads around Akbar in order to unite centre with periphery in pictorial harmony. Elaborate spirals may be traced *Akbar kills a tigress near the fort of Narwar in 1561*, a double page, pl. 41. On the left hand page, an 'S' curve unites the top and bottom halves of the action and on the right, a golden section spiral dominates. The spiral makes other appearances and in an episode in the *Akbar-nama* depicting the *Burning of Rajput women during the fall of Chittor in 1568* where a curve is initiated by the circle of heads formed by the ill fated women in the fort shown above, continued by the sliver of green grass left of the text box to continue along the battlements of the fort, ending in an opposing direction with the trunk of the elephant below. But this line does not end there, the spiral skirts the triangle of one tent furthest below and to another above to finish at the point where there is a third triangular tent shape in between these two. To further emphasise this, the border of the camp enclosure follows the spiral exactly. Other examples of this previously unnoticed pictorial scheme in this manuscript are abundant attesting to a shared tradition of compositional and aesthetic practice among artists, Stronge, pl. 55.

[54]Almost exactly the same principles of composition may be found in the same artist, Mukund's illustration of *Mohammad Amin Diwana Escorting the Widow of Bairam Khan*. f. 533b of the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama.*

[55] Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 132.

[56] Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 138

[57] Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 144. In its crudest form: "The formal linear idiom stood for the power structure of Shah Jahani rule, for the forces that regulated the system" 161.

[58]Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, fig. 5.6 and in Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, fig. 86.

[59] Shah Jahan had "absolute control over the pictorial world and its laws of representation", Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 142.

[60] The idea that bilateral symmetry was used to express the concept of *qarina*, dominant in the Shah Jahan period (an architectural expression related to "counter-image" seen in the balance counter balance of architectural forms) as put forward by Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 135, may have its origins not in Shah Jahan but in Akbar period painting where a picture of the construction of Fathepur Sikri in 1571 in the Victoria and Albert *Akbar-nama* Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 54 shows two elephants symmetrically forming an archway. The relation between "real life" symmetry and architecture is clear

here but symmetry reappears in other examples in Mughal art: Layla-Majnun fainting and in Khusrau and Shirin meeting on the hunting field, both in the British Library *Khamsa*, see B. Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, figs. 8, 21 and in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pls. vii, pl. xvii (which may also be seen as a hexagon) and pl. xxix. Mughal manuscript painting in the Akbar period was extremely familiar with the intertextual feature of bilateral symmetry and it is curious that Koch has not situated the symmetry of the *Padshah-nama* court scenes in this obvious visual tradition. See other compositional prototypes for the *Padshah-nama* manuscript in B. Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, figs. 2, 15, 47 and the *simurgh*s on f. 285b, shown in Brend, 54. A similar reductionism of the compositional arrangements of miniatures to bilateral symmetry is evident in Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh, The "Licit Magic" of the Arts In Medieval Islam* (New York University Press, New York, 1988). 143-146.

[61]For Koch a major aspect of the *Padshah-nama* paintings was that "The focus was on static court assemblies or darbar scenes." Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 132. This is precisely the kind of concept targeted by Derrida in his critique of the static geometric structuralism of Rousset who analyses literature by reducing it to a basic geometrical scheme, which Derrida characterised as "flat" as opposed to something characterised by "force" and "dynamised volume", qualities made apparent by interpretations of art that are various, flexible and non-dogmatic. See C. Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16. Necipoglu appears to reach similar conclusions when she writes of the "polysemic" aspects of Islamic geometry in the *Topkapi Scroll*, 123.

[62] Similarly, pictorial or compositional dynamism is suggested in readings of Giotto's work: "the composition moves and stops as the narrative progresses and pauses; its rhythms contrasts and expands, its masses rise, fall and incline". Richard Offner, 'Giotto, Non-Giotto' *Burlington Magazine* LXXXIV (1939), 259-268. Giotto's *Baptism* and *Crucifixion* frescos in the Arena Chapel, Padua are multivalent and dynamic in the compositional viewing choices they offer, from the suggestions of triangular, lozenge, cruciform and *mandorla* shapes each of which may be seen at different moments of the viewing process in a flowing or dynamic movement of perception.

[63] The term is not meant to evoke the trivial or frivolous associated with it. I mean, rather, the play associated with playing a musical instrument, and so "to play the painting" would be to interpret it according to one's own intellectual aptitude and inclination. But also, what is meant here in relation to the perception of Mughal painting in both a modern and historical sense is the kind of play elucidated by the following phrases: "play on words", to see the painting as a representation of two things at the same time, that is, as mimesis but also as pictorial language which interplays with the viewer's ability to recognise and use it; "bring into play": the idea that one is bringing out inherent structures and forms in the pictorial order, in order to interact with one's own art historical knowledge and experience of these forms; "to play along with", in the sense of cooperating with the directions indicated by the pictorial order, and especially, "free play" the concept of intellectual motion unimpeded by literal or self-evident explanations.

[64] "The active production of images and the passive reception of visual stimuli are both aspects of artistic creativity." Priscilla Soucek, 'Nizami on Painters and Painting' in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), 12. This approaches an important aspect of literary theory in Western culture to do with the concept of "refiguration" and reception theory. Modern critical theory in the form of the writing of Paul Ricoeur (for a good, general introduction see, M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader, Reflection and Imagination* (Hemel Hampstead: Havester and Wheatsheaf, 1991), and Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1978) have helped us to understand that the creative act is both the creation of the work of art from the traditional artistic point of view and also the reception of the work. The work of art is not frozen by the world of the author/artist. The reader shares in the creative act, reactivating and fusing it in numerous personal, social and cultural ways with his or her psyche and in so doing, extending that psyche. This is a conjoining of aesthetic, mythological and phenomenological experience. "The emplotment […] is a conjoint work of the text and its reader" Ricoeur, in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 151.

[65] A similar conclusion was reached by Grabar writing of the dome of the great mosque at Isfahan where the designer proposed "different and alternate readings of the dome. The rhombs or triangles around the pentagon can be given prominence or else the pentagon itself and the line of the brick derived from it and it is easy to multiply possible visual effects of this striking dome. None of them is necessarily the exclusively correct one." Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 147.

[66] "[…] we bring to the viewing of the picture a whole range of different pre-conceived, pre-established sets of values—religious, social, political etc.—and as we recognise a given subject-matter we expect to match its pre-established values and its 'real' hierarchical structure to the formal order, the hierarchical display of the image." Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 33.

[67] See Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. C. S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

[68] Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 29.

[69] It is interesting that the painting of the *Emperor Jahangir on the Hourglass Throne* also has a sub-theme of a similar kind, the Emperor is shown as a stable force above and beyond the passing of time.

[70] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 155.

[71] In the analysis of the painting of Shah Jahan hunting in the *Padshah-nama* Koch proposes that the wealth of details of nature, of animals and foliage were the result of long hours of waiting on the emperor to choose his shot. Koch and Beach, *Padshah-nama*, 193. There is no evidence to suggest that the Mughal painters worked "*en plein air*", waiting for the exact pose, despite the picture of Nanha shown painting the event of the submission of Rana of Mewar to Prince Khurram, which may or may not have been a post hoc studio recreation rather than a picture of what actually occurred. The details of animals and the rural scenes in the hunting portrait of Shah Jahan are composites of individual studies put together in an imaginative recreation of an ideal scene (to include the halo), rather than an immediate record of what was actually experienced directly.

Hence, the further explanation that Shah Jahan preferred to be painted with the scenes of common folk in the background to make a point that he could be "close to his people" contradicts the naturalist assumption, as does the fact that these vignettes have precedents in the Akbar period as stock types, rather than studies in observation.

[72] Faces "tend to stand out from the background and are connected formally in such manner that the eye can read or at least sense the underlying structure of the composition." Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 102. Oleg Grabar has commented on the inter-relationships based on the exchange of the gaze that occur between depicted individuals in Persian painting "All the miniatures of a certain quality are organised by a circuit of gazes that the protagonists launch at each other. It is a complex and passionate game of clues that, as in an embroidery, organises the relationships among the persons." O. Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures: An Introduction to Persian Painting* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), 133. Johann Christoph Bürgel, states "eye rays" are "rays proceeding from the eyes of one of the figures to other important elements of the picture in a diagonal direction and introducing a diagonal drift into the structure suggests this further. To assume that such rays existed in the mind of the artist seems to me not too remote an idea, given the fact that the generally adopted theory of seeing in that epoch conceived of visual rays proceeding from the eye to the object." Johann Christoph Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh*, 146. "Eye rays" are clearly visible in Renaissance painting. In Raphael's work, for example, in the so-called *La Belle Jardiniere*, the Madonna looks into the eyes of the Christ child and an infant St. John looks at them looking at each other. Such a relationship of gazes enforces the idea of a triangular composition. For related studies of the gaze see, Gregory Minissale, 'The Dynamics of the Gaze in Mughal Painting', *Marg* vol. 58, no. 2, December, 2006, and 'Seeing Eye-To-Eye With Mughal Miniatures: Some Observations on the Outward Gazing Figure in Mughal Art', *Marg*, vol.58, no.3, March, 2007.

[73] "The direction implied in a gesture or glance creates another movement of our eye which we speak of as a line [Just as] when a finger is pointed our eye moves from it to the thing pointed to, thus creating a type of line […] we follow the glance or stare of a person to the object of his attention" Bates Lowry, *The Visual Experience: An Introduction* (Prentice-Hall International: London, 1961), 30.

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[76] The same semantic and visual principle of composition may be seen in the *Akbar-nama* double page *Akbar fighting with the Raja Man Singh*. See Asok Kumar Das, 'Dawlat', in Pal, *Master Artists*, fig. 6. This principle of the network of gazes aligned in radial form in relation to the centre is evident also in a depiction of an encounter between a king and a dervish in the *Baharistan*. This painting, 1595 is also by Lala[76] and in *An Attempt on Akbar's Life* in the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama*, a solar pattern of visual rays is created by large number of figures staring at the person of the emperor.

[77] Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, pls. 17, 14.

[78] See *Akbar learns to shoot under the guidance of Bairam Khan* in Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 219; *Jahangir at the jharoka window*, fig. 216; *Jahangir receiving Qutb al-Din Khan Koka*, in Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, pl. 86; and *Prince Parviz received by Jahangir*, in Terence McInerney, 'Manohar', in Pal, ed., *Master Artists*, fig. 15.

[79] Beach and Koch, Padshahnama, pl. 39

[80] See Gülru Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Palaces', *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 23, 317. The article draws attention to the power of the gaze, not only of the emperor's at the centre of architectural schemes and designs but the power of this position in attracting the gaze of all others. It is both an omnipotent gaze and one that is highly visible as fixed, singular, omnipotent and central. It should come as no surprise that the compositional designs of painting follow these "ocular politics". However, it is not the emperor's body that is fetishized into an object for the gaze, as Necipoglu asserts (315), but the emperor's *gaze*. In this sense, the eye attracts the eye creating a relationship of dominance and power through the symbolic space of architecture and painting. The emperor in these representations adopts the function of a panopticon. The subject of the all-seeing eye (the panopticon is hidden but is still conceptually visible as a window, camera or other aperture), which sees and is believed to be all-seeing (or "polyscopic", so to speak) which is a basis of its power, has been analyzed by Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195-228.

[81] Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, pls. 27-28. This pictorial order lies at the heart of a painting in the *Akbar-nama*, the double page depicting the submission of the rebel brothers, Ali Quli and Bahadur Khan to Akbar where half a dozen figures all direct their

gaze up to the emperor from a wide range of positions in the painting, one of the most noticeable being the elephant rider and the rebel brothers themselves. To unite the double page pictorially, figures on the other page aim their gazes across to Akbar some of them saluting him with the traditional gesture of bowing with hand and arm wrapped over the top of the head.

[82] See a painting, originally part of the Houghton *Shah-nama,* by Aqa Mirak of Kay Qubad enthroned on Mount Alburz, in S. C. Welch, *Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1501-1576* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, 1979), no. 19. A group of musicians gaze at a group of courtiers, bottom right, who in turn look up to a royal cupbearer who looks up to the king. In a majority of paintings in this manuscript, however, the pictorial gaze is organized in a different manner, where couples tend to look into each other's eyes diagonally and at close quarters forming sets of couples throughout the pictorial space, see for example, a detail from a painting of Minuchihr enthroned at the beginning of his reign, published in Sotheby's Catalogue, *Persian and Indian Manuscripts and Miniatures from the Collection Formed by the British Rail Pension Fund*, London: Sotheby's, Tuesday, 23rd April, 1996, 30, fig. 13.

[83] Composition by Govardhan, 1604. Chester Beatty Library *Akbar-nama*, Dublin Ms. 3, f. 176v.

[84] Even today, the power of the gaze remains stubbornly close to the idea of transmission: "One day, quite some time ago, I happened on a photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother, Jerome, taken in 1852. And I realized then, with an amazement I have not been able to lessen since: 'I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor' " Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 3. But the gaze may also be transferred by the emperor for great effect, according to Abu Fazl: the "transmuting glance" of the Emperor Akbar was supposed to have changed one of his painter's work from outer form to inner meaning, *Akbar-nama* (Bib. Indica) Trans. H. Beveridge, vol. I (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948), 298. It is not clear whether this phrase was meant literally or metaphorically but it would be consistent with the nature of Abu'l Fazl's literary style to interpret it from both perspectives. For further discussion of this, see Gregory Minissale, 'The Dynamics of the Gaze in Mughal Painting.'

[85] Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection, M. 141.

[86] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama,* pls. 14, 38, 39.

[87] The most recent, comprehensive study is by Gülru Necipoglu, *The Topkapi Scroll.* This superlative study has a rich amount of material dealing with the pronouncements of Islamic writers from the early Islamic period up to the sixteenth century on various matters to do with visual aesthetics and psychology in relation to the perception and use of geometry.

[88] For the Islamic philosopher and theorist Ibn al-Haytham, known in the West as Alhazen (965-1040), the beauty of writing is due only to the soundness of the shapes of letters and their composition among themselves […] Similarly, many forms of visible objects are felt to be beautiful and appealing only because of the composition and order of their parts among themselves" Quoted in Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll,* 190. See also David J. Roxburgh, 'Kamal al-din Bihzad and authorship in Persianate Painting', which suggests the integration of painting and writing.

[89] Necipoglu makes a similar observation: "The relevance of such philosophical texts for architectural and artisanal production has not been explored systematically. Conceptual categories provided by Islamic intellectual history have been ignored by art historians who focus on the hard data of archaeology […] the few interpretative studies emphasise political and ideological contexts of art and architecture, largely overlooking more elusive questions about aesthetic philosophy." Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 186.

[90] In the Kervorkian Album, 55.121.10.41 Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, even the height of an ogee cartouche of the most elaborate kind, shaped into a thumbpiece on the border of page is proportioned according to the distance between the inner margin rules surrounding the text block, at the centre for example.

[91] All paintings of this manuscript mentioned in this chapter are in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

[92] In the painting of the princess of the Blue Pavilion by Manohar, the height of the text block is used as a measurement for the height of the seated figures in the pavilion, the fairy is also painted with her knee stretched lower to approximate this height. Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pl. xxvii. In some cases, in addition to the height of the figures premised on the height of the text block, divisions of space take their lead from the same source. The princess of the White Pavilion depicting the story of the talisman that laughs when it hears an untruth, the text block is used as a module. Trebled, the height of the text block equals the length of the two symmetrical walls "in perspective" at the front of the palace complex. The length of the text block is used for many other measurements in the painting, for the two flanking entrances with guards on either side; but also, this same measurement equals the width of the pavilion (the outer line of each pillar) sheltering the king and his guest, the height of the door of the entrance to the whole palace complex and various other measurements, pl. xxix. In the painting of the story of the virtuous woman who plucks out her eyes to silence the king, the text block is used as a module, pl. vi.

[93] See the height of the text block, which measures the height of Mary the Copt cf. Brend, *Khamsa*, fig. 38, and in a painting of a court scene of the Shah Shirvanshah seated, he is also the same height at the text block, fig. 15; in another painting the text block has determined a number of the dominant vertical divisions of the pictorial space in the young man who sees bathers in his garden, fig. 26.

[94] Mawlana Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492).

[95] Figure/text block correlations on f. 29a where Abdullah Ibn Ja'far is twice the height of the text block; many other registers are also equal in height cf. Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, fig. 37.

[96] See a painting of Babur receiving envoys in a garden that has a text block the height of which is used as the measurement for other elements in the picture: the width of Babur's seat, the width of the opening in the wall at the bottom, including decorative borders; the height of the fort wall and fort entrance in the distance and the height of the carpet on which Babur's throne and pavilion stand. Doubling this length equals the width of the canopy covering Babur, the inside border of the carpet in blue, the measurements between the uprights of the canopy, the width of the lower wall at the bottom of the picture on the left side, the length of the carpet on which sit three advisors to Babur, and this equals the height of the two envoys who show obeisance to the emperor.

[97] A related, earlier study of the division of pictorial space into vertical and horizontal registers premised on the measurements of text blocks have been examined in Shiraz painting by Grace D. Guest, *Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1949), 25-32. This work may be seen as a precursor to the study attempted here and strengthens my argument that artists in various Islamic painting traditions were eager to observe measured and proportional pictorial divisions of space in harmony with the text block. However, Guest restricted his study to the major divisions of pictorial space and failed to see that the system of proportions was also important in depictions of figures and architecture and detailed relations between pictorial elements. This integrative aesthetic must have its origins in the Timurid unity of text, illumination and illustration alluded to by Adel T. Adamova, 'The Hermitage Manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa* Dated 835/1431' in E. Grube and E. Sims (eds.) *Islamic Art* V, 2001 (Genova and New York: Bruschettini Foundation and East-West Foundation, 2001), 78.

[98] Guest observes that the work of Shiraz born artist 'Abd as-Samad, regarded as one of the founders of the Mughal painting style, consistently used horizontal and vertical divisions of space which are premised on the dimensions of the text block. Guest, *Shiraz Painting*, 29.

[99] Ambergris has been greatly valued from the earliest times. It is a wax like substance originating as a concretion in the intestine of the sperm whale and used to attract the female of the species (it has a concentration of pheromones). Lighter than water, it is found floating on tropical seas or cast up on the shores of Mauritania, Somalia and India in yellow, grey, black, or variegated masses, these are usually a few ounces in weight, although pieces weighing several hundred pounds have been found. The poetic idea was that the calligrapher wrote with black ambergris, burnt as incense, which further evokes the image of plumes of smoke and perfume, used to describe the fluidity and "sweetness" of 'Abd al-Rahim's calligraphy that carries with it the beauty and imagery of poetry and the natural world.

[100] There are other examples in Jahangir period paintings. See Jahangir receiving Prince Parviz, the width of the miniature is exactly the distance from the top of Jahangir's head to the margin at the bottom of the painting. Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 87. In *Jahangir on the Hourglass Throne*, the top of head to the edge of his round throne is the same measurement as the diameter of the sun halo behind him.

[101] In another painting in the same manuscript, the departure of Prince Shah Shuja' for Kabul, the golden rules that are used for the margins appear in the pictorial space to represent the edges of balconies, enclosures and other aspects of architecture; the pillars on either side of the *jharoka* balcony in particular are made up of a series of golden lines which resemble margin rules. There are also a series of measured interrelationships. The height of three figures at least is used as measurement for other architectural details in the painting. The width of the white balcony roof over the head of the Emperor equals the distance between the outer rim of the halo of the Emperor and the bottom of the bell on a chain beneath his throne and other measurements around the throne area. Throughout the manuscript, measured proportions and interrelationships are plentiful.

[102] Puttfarken asserts for Western art that "There are two senses in which the human body could be referred to as a paradigm of order and unity. Alberti invokes both. The first is ontological, the second functional. Discussion of the ontological sense goes back to

Pythagoras and Plato and focuses on the analogy between the human body and the universe. The human body, understood as a microcosm, virtually contains the order of the universe, the macrocosm." *Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 60.

[103] This is in agreement with the philosophy of the Brethren of Purity that music and poetry, calligraphy and painting must all conform to the proportions of the universe and in particular, "painters need to observe the right proportions of colors, shapes and sizes for figures." Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 188.

[104] Richard Offner 'Giotto-Non-Giotto' in Andrew Ladis ed., *A Discerning Eye. Essays on Early Italian Painting by Richard Offner* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), 62.

[105] Richard Offner in *A Discerning Eye*, 64.

[106] "What the single figure does seems accordingly, dictated by the will of the larger economy, while the total action reflects an ideal order, heralded and prefigured in the visible structure of the composition. So closely are the content and form involved with each other, that the organic correlation of the physical terms induces a sense of a more comprehensive stability […] directly symbolic of an eternal, unshakeable world. Thus being is emphasised over doing, eternity over the moment, idea over fact." Richard Offner in: *A Discerning Eye*, 64.

[107] Used for the high-saturated colours of an manuscript from Islamic Spain by Meyer Shapiro, *Romanesque Art: Selected Papers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), 35

[108] There are some paintings that occasionally do have a number of half tones and especially for background scenes, but these occurrences are not as frequently seen as the shadowless brilliance of most colouring in Mughal art in all periods. The *Padshah-nama* revives this use of intense colour.

[109] Writing of the colours of medieval art in Europe, which appear to share this visual aesthetic, Umberto Eco writes: "The figurative art of the period shows quite a different colour consciousness from that of succeeding centuries. It confined itself to simple and primary colours. It had a kind of chromatic decisiveness quite opposed to *sfumatura*. It depended on a reciprocal coupling of hues that generated its own brilliance and not on the devices of *chiaroscuro*, where the hue is determined by light and can even spread beyond the edges the design." Umberto Eco, *Art and beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 44.

[110]This passage is in much agreement with Papadopoulo who writes "The grass is green but of the particular pure green that fits the requirements of the artist at each point of the autonomous world of the miniature […] the choice does not depend on reality but on the internal necessities of the particular work at hand". Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 110. Even art historians who usually laud Mughal art for its illusionism have occasionally realised that there is more to Mughal painting than meets the eye. Referring to a Persian painting by Bihzad of *Sa'di and the Youth of Kashgar*, Milo Cleveland Beach remarked "This is a formally idealised space different from our own, for we could not experience the interrelationships of these patterns in this way at the actual scene" Milo Cleveland Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 57. This observation is extremely relevant to many of the paintings in the *Padshah-nama* but the author has not made this connection.

[111] Blochmann, *A'in-i Akbari*, 96.

[112] In the Victoria and Albert *Akbar-nama*, Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pls. 22, 45, 51 and in a painting of Akbar hawking c. 1600-05, pl. 75. In pl. 54, a painting of Akbar inspecting construction work at Fatehpur Sikri, the emperor is placed in the upper register of the pictorial order, dressed in white, and below him are many figures dressed in various robes of different colours and black is reserved for the figures and animals in the lowest registers of the painting.

[113] Several uses of the colour black to symbolise negative connotations are to be found in Sa'di's *Bustan*: "A certain one called one of blackish color, ugly;" and "No one has seen one of blacker deeds than me", black is both ugly in appearance and evil, but see also the following verses "While the young man causes the blackness (of hair) to attain to light (whiteness)/The wretched old man takes his whiteness to the grave" contrasts blackness with the follies of youth which are spent (made white or innocent by time). White is associated with light and old age "One, willow like, in solitude, in the desert/ His head and hair white with the snow of old age".

[114] These values are inherent in Sa'di's poetry, in his *Bustan*, we read, "Dear ones of God concealed from the people's eye; Not those waist-cord-possessing, clothed in the habit of the dervish/They are full of fruit, and shady, vine like; Are not like us, of black deeds, and blue garment-dyers."

[115] Herat, 1494. Basil Gray, *Persian Painting* (Geneva: Skira, 1961), 122.

[116] In Sa'di's *Gulistan*, we read "What profits it to kiss a friend's face/And at the same time to take leave of him? Thou wouldst say that he who parts from friends is an apple/one half of his face is red and the other yellow." Red is associated with good health and conviviality and yellow with sickness and loneliness.

[117] A couplet from Sa'di's *Bustan* reads: "Behold the red rose of my face pure yellow/ When the sun becomes yellow it descends." And elsewhere, "The candle kept speaking/and every moment a torrent of grief/Ran down on its yellow cheeks". These show negative connotations for yellow, described as a sign of sickness, old age, over-ripeness and sorrow.

[118]Often traduced in English as 'mirage' but probably based on the French 'mirare': ' to look at'. There appears no prior usage before the eighteenth century which has encouraged some to believe that the word is a malicious transliteration of the Arabic '*mi'raj*' by Napoleonic troops in Egypt. The evidence is inconclusive.

[119] Meisami, *Haft Paykar*, xxix

[120] Michael Barry, *Colour and Symbolism in Islamic Architecture. Eight Centuries of the Tilemaker's Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 279.

[121] Schimmel, *Empire of the Mughals*, 178.

[122] In Sa'di's *Gulistan* (Rose Garden), green is associated with special religious celebration on Eid holidays "Green garments were upon the trees/Like holiday robes on contented persons" associating the vernal properties of the colour with a celebration of life, after the "desert" of fasting. No wonder so many Mughal emeralds that have survived are inscribed with designs of palm trees suggesting the traditional oasis.

[123] Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 41.

[124] See Seyller, et. al., *Hamza-nama*, pl. 83. Another conflict is seen, pl. 79.

[125] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot*, pl. XVII.

[126] See a Shiraz manuscript of Firdausi's *Shah-nama* c. 1405 in E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pl. 7; an early example is from a fourteenth century *Shah-nama*, c. 1325-35, pl. 14. See also a folio in the Muhammad Juki *Shah-nama*, Basil Gray, *Persian Painting*, 91 and a polo match in Abolala Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts,* fig. 24.
[127] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 20.
[128] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 36.
[129]This is seen in pages of the sixteenth century Persian *Haft Awrang* This is also implied as potential on folio 114b of the Persian *Haft Awrang* made for Ibrahim Mirza, where Zulaykha's jealousy may be suggested in coupling together one of her maidens and Yusuf in a garden, see M. Shreve-Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 18. There are, perhaps, the implications of homosexual romance in a scene of two youths in a landscape, pl. 71, pl. 62, one red, one green and for folio 179b, where the red and green attendants on either side signify the encounter in their red and green costumes, 5. See also two male figures in conflict over love and beauty in the British Museum, B. Robinson, *Persian Miniatures* (New York: Citadel Press, 1957), pl. X.
[130] See Marianna Shreve-Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang. A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1997), pl. 124, and again in a Bodleian Library Ms. Ouseley, Add. 24, dated 1552, B. Robinson, *Persian Miniatures*, pl. XVII.
[131] Shreve-Simpson, *A Princely Manuscript*, pl. 46.
[132] In the Persian *Haft Awrang*, and in a painting done in Isfahan, c. 1590 in Glenn D. Lowry with Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweller's Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1988), pl. 185, no. 60 where two other lovers may be seen in the same colours in a Bukharan manuscript painting, c. 1550, pl. 190, no. 63. For the Humay and Humayun see a painting from Herat c. 1483-85 in Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, fig. 8 and for other lovers in a manuscript dated 1559, Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweller's Eye*, pls. 132-133, no. 35.
[133] In a copy of the manuscript of the poet Sa'di's *Bustan*, Herat, 1488.
[134] E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pl. 248. The colour contrast for lovers may be seen in a painting of lovers embracing in an album from Isfahan, c. 1610-20 and lovers under a tree, after 1647, Sims, *Peerless Images*, pls. 159, 160, 161, 162. Also here, see also the portrait of Khusrau shown to Shirin, she, in green, he in red (in the portrait), pl. 77 and for two men, pls. 71, 81, 151.
[135] For Yusuf, in the Persian *Haft Awrang*, made for Ibrahim Mirza, see Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang.* See also kindred spirits Yusuf and Gabriel, one red one green, in the Haft Awrang, Shreve-Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage* 34, and for another painting of Gabriel in red and green, a *mi'raj* scene, pl. 126. See also an angel lassoing another, possibly Jibrail capturing Iblis (?) in red and green in a margin painting from the Timurid period, Herat, 1425-50 *Shah-nama*, W. T. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles and Washington DC, 1989), cat. no. 44A-B.
[136]See Sims, *Peerless Images*, pls. 142, 145, 156.

[137] Light blue is contrasted with dark blue not infrequently but is seen far more frequently in Persian art. A darker blue is often used as architectural decoration (repeating and invoking the colour of book illumination) in the Timurid and early Safavid periods, hence there is a reduction of its use for costumes and dress, which is appropriate, as dress in blue (mourning) has a different connotation from architecture/book illumination in blue. When this dies out in later Safavid periods, dark blue is used with caution and keeps a strong tie with yellow, which is also used far less frequently than the other colours. Of course, there are exceptions; so called Qazwin painting has its own distinct palette that sometimes runs contrary to these principles, using yellow far more often. Although lapis lazuli from Badakhshan, used for the pigment in painting was highly expensive, this does not entirely explain why yellow and blue were used sparingly. The negative connotations in poetry and literature attached to these colours are factors for their limited use that need also to be considered. Despite this, page headings and frontispieces and other aspects of illumination were lavish in their display of lapis blue (with horses' saddles and carpets, quite often painted in this blue) but these occurrences are conceptually different from dressing a person in blue, a kind of statement which would have struck the viewer as significant in a traditional socially mediated structure of nuances and meanings attached to that colour and expressed consistently in poetry and literature.

[138] For examples of this apparent preference to use a single yellow in Persian painting over several historical periods, see a manuscript of the *Masnavi* of Khwaju Kirmani, 1396 a poor woman accosts Malikshah, only one of the Sultan's retinue is dressed in yellow, E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, 158, pl. 73. See a painting of a party at the court of Husayn Mirza, from a *Bustan* of Sa'di, Herat, dated 1488, where there is only one person dressed in yellow, another less noticeable one pouring wine, and a third isolated top right of the painting. There is also a coupling of other colours. There is only one dark blue, several light blues and two figures in black, one of them being driven out by a figure by a doorman in orange, see, cat. no. 146. In a painting of the portrait of Khusrau shown to Shirin, Herat, 1494-95, only one of Shirin's courtiers is in yellow, pl. 77. In the same publication there is a nomad encampment scene, Tabriz, 1539-43, pl. 172, where only one figure is dressed in yellow, as in an illustration painted in Qazvin or Mashad, c. 1575, pl. 145. A Herat or Isfahan painting of 1602 of the court of Zal and Rudaba has a solitary courtier dressed in yellow amongst all the others, pl. 158; this occurs again around 1609 in a *Mantiq al-Tayr* manuscript, pl. 98; a late eighteenth century Shiraz painting of a Persian court receiving a Mughal ambassador continues this visual tradition, pl. 128. For a c. 1581 Herat example see Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl. 190b and a *Bustan* of Sa'di , pl. 137a and in Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweller's Eye*, pl. 59, 1540 Tabriz; Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art*, has published a folio of the Shah Tahmasp *Shah-nama*, Tabriz 1540, pl. 35 (again, showing a sparingly used blue). Various other examples appear in Yuri A. Petrosyan [...] [et al.], *Pages of Perfection*, cat. No. 171; and in the Timurid period, see also, a *Mantiq al-Tayr*, of 'Attar, Herat, 1483, in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 153 and a good example in the 1494 *Khamsa* of Nizami, cat. no. 140, and cat. no. 157, a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, 1486, Herat.

[139] Such oppositions are abundant as early as the Timurid period, see Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 85, an Iranian or Central Asian painting c.1425-

50 showing four figures in a tree, one wears yellow and blue (inside opposition) the others on the outer wings green and red.

[140] These consistencies occur over a number of widely different manuscripts in various periods and from many different historical locations. For prophets and dervishes see E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pls. 54, 62, 84 and 174, and Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art* cover illustration, of drunken dervishes in several shades of blue, as well as in Shreve-Simpson, *A Princely Manuscript*, 149, pl . 96, and pl. 111. The prophet is shown in blue in a 1525-30 Bukharan painting in a mosque in a *Baharistan* of Jami, Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 159. For poets or scholars, see Sims, et. al, *Peerless Images*, pls. 126, 164, 175, and 184. Manizha 'in mourning' is dressed in blue in the Muhammad Juki *Shahnama*, 1440 painted in Herat, *Peerless Images*, pl. 67, other mourners are seen in various other manuscripts from different periods in pls. 58, 59, 60 and in a painting of mourning for Layla's husband in a 1494 *Khamsa*, BL Or. 6810 in Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, fig. 75 and in the death of Farhad, 1494, Herat, fig. 58; for the ill-fated Majnun, see pl. 157. In a painting depicting the mourning of Ibn Salam the predominant colours are dark blue and black, see Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 140. For old women see *Peerless Images*, pl. 73, where the old woman accosting the Sultan is dressed in blue as she is in another illustration of the same episode, pl. 127 and also in a c.1490 *Khamsa*, BL Add. 25,900, publ. Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, fig. 63. For the occurrence of blue which is purposely reduced, or isolated see a manuscript of the *Masnavi* of Khwaju Kirmani, 1396, which has a painting of the *mir'aj* of the prophet, only one angel is dressed in blue, and the same is true of only one attendant in blue out of many others in a *Mir'aj-nama* of c.1325-50, *Peerless Images*, pl. 63. Much later in Isfahan painting of the early seventeenth century, a figure in blue is excluded from the main pictorial space, pl. 42. For other examples of the reduced or singular use of dark blue, see *Peerless Images*, pls. 9, 75, 77, 83,117, 168 169, 234, 239. In addition to these examples see also, a singular blue in a *Khamsa* of Nizami British Library Or. 2265, in Sheila R. Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (New York: Abrams, 2000), pl. 36 and an attendant in blue, Shreve-Simpson, *A Princely Manuscript*, fig. 136 and pls. 66, 102 (where a single yellow also appears) and, pls. 114, 118. In Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, see an illustrated manuscript of a *Makzan al-Asrar*, 1614, Isfahan, 278, pl. 110f where several other isolated blues appear and in a *Mehr u Mushtari* of 'Assar, in the same publication, pls. 45b, 45e as well as a 1486 painting of Sa'di and the youth of Kashgar, pl. 36c and in a *Bustan* of Sa'di, pl. 137c. Other examples of this principle of colour use are Layla and Majnun at school, in Robinson, *Persian Miniatures*, pl. XI, a 1488 *Bustan* of Sa'di, Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, fig. 60; Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, cat. no. 32 has a painting from a *Khamsa* of Nizami Herat, dated,1445-46; a 1425-50 illustration from a Herat *Khamsa* depicting Bahram Gur hunting, has one attendant in dark blue, cat. no. 62 but see also page in a poetic anthology, Yazd, 1407, cat. no. 59; Iskandar visiting a hermit from a *Khamsa* of Nizami, Herat, dated 1494-1495 with a solitary blue and much reduced yellow, far top left, cat. no. 140; and another, c. 1490 for a strategically targeted use of blue in one or two places, cat. no. 145, as well as in a *Zafar-nama* of Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, 1467-68, cat. no. 147.

[141] Seyller, *Pearl of the Parrot of India*, pls. XIV, XVI.

[142] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, pl. 148.
[143] Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, pl. 8.
[144] Seyller, *Pearl of the Parrot of India*, pl. 1.
[145]There are seven examples of the sole use of blue in several different illustrated Mughal period manuscripts in one publication alone, see Sotheby's Catalogue *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, Wednesday 26th April, 1995, Lot 122, 115; Lot 123, 116; Lot 124, 117 (left), and Lot 125, 118 (right); Lot 126, 119 (coupled with yellow); Lot 127, 120; Lot 128, 121; Lot 130, 122, with a single yellow. For the same chromatic phenomenon in the Victoria and Albert Museum *Akbar-nama* see Stronge, pls. 51, 52, 53; coupled with a singular yellow in pl. 56 and in the Victorian and Albert *Babur-nama* in which a singular blue occurs on other occasions, see pl. 57, and in a painting of the judgement of Solomon, pl. 67. In the British Library *Khamsa*, see Brend, *Khamsa*, figs. 10, 11. In the *Harivamsa*, see Steven Kossak, *Indian Court Painting, 16th-19th century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), pl. 11, and in the Jahangir period in the Metropolitan Museum publ. Stuart Cary Welch, *The Emperor's Album*, pl. 52.
[146] Single or much reduced blues are seen in Koch and Beach in *Padshah-nama*, pls. 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 25, 26, 28
[147] Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, pl. 3.
[148] See Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pls. 2, 3, 35, 33, 35, 38, 43, 44 (with only a fraction of yellow at the top) and pls. 45, 48, 49, 53; for the *Babur-nama*, pl. 57.
[149] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pls. xx, xxi, xxii xxvii, xxviii, xxix.
[150] Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 44.
[151] One is reminded of the point that because the prints that reached India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were monochrome they could never have been used to inform Mughal painters of European colour habits or use. This point is made by Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 66.
[152] See Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, cover.
[153] Prince Awrangzeb at court in Lahore Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 44.and *Jahangir presents Prince Khurram with a turban ornament* also adopt this convention, pl. 39
[154] Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, pls. 7, 8-9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, and especially 32; 36, 37, 41, 42, 43.
[155]This dates back to Ibn al-Haytham who stated explicitly that "bright and pure colours and designs are more beautiful when regularly and uniformly ordered than when they have no order." Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 190. One assumes that this was a perception based on his observation of the visual arts.
[156] A critique of the idea of mimesis is necessary to appreciate this: the artist's reception of sense particulars produces a mental image or understanding, which is represented in the process of painting. This is already in excess of or less than the original sense particular, *per se*. And, to make matters more complex, the painting itself becomes another sense particular for someone else to interpret as less than or in excess of his own internal mental representation to himself. Meanwhile, the artist may experience this process of abstraction during the process of painting, or after it is finished, leading to a kind of reflexivity. One of the intervening cognitive processes between internal mental

imagery and the viewing of sense particulars is a knowledge of pictorial traditions: "The effect of a picture on a picture as a factor in style is much more important than what comes directly from the imitation of nature […] It is a dilettantish notion that the artist could ever take up his stand before nature without any preconceived ideas […] all artistic beholding is bound to certain decorative schemas [as in Mughal art] or—to repeat the expression—the visible world is crystallised for the eye in certain forms. In each new crystal form, however, a new facet of the content of the world will come to light" Fernie, ed., *Art History and its Methods*, 146. There is an element of inevitability in this, clearly indicated to us by Kantian philosophy which points to how human understanding "imposes certain categories, concepts, or rules upon the world we see […] space and time are among the categories that the mind supplies" Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth* (London: Routledge, 2000), 66.

[157] In the purely Islamic domain, Necipoglu writes "By implication geometrised designs […] constituted mental images that were inherently superior to naturalistic representations based on sense perceptions." *Topkapi Scroll*, 210.

[158] Ernst H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance I* (London, 1966), 94. Even as one of the art historians who have done most to understand the role of naturalist impulses in art, Gombrich still maintained that however 'naturalistic' art is, it is still "a manipulation of vocabulary" rather than primarily a reflection of the world, as such, see Ernst H. Gombrich, *The Image and the Eye: Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 1982), 70, 78, 100.

[159]This is the meaning of Wittgenstein's famous remark that "The limits of language […] mean the limits of my world" in *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1974), 1. 13, 5. Theorists such as Northrop Frye, Frazer, Cassirer and Spengler all in various ways point out the "human capacity to fill their world with shapes they themselves impose upon what they perceive." Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth*, 65.

[160] Geometry and symbols "interpose between humans and external nature a "symbolic net" in which individuals are "enveloped" which remain upon a natural landscape." Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth*, 67. Frye calls this envelope, "mythology".

[161] This terminology is used by Gülru Necipoglu in a comprehensive discussion of this phenomenon in Islamic intellectual history, see *Topkapi Scroll*, 198-205.

[162] See Seyller, *Pearls from the Parrot of India*, 112-114.

[163] Ibid. 112. We know very little about how much a painting was the intellectual property of patron, supervisor or artist, or a composite of all of these influences. It is logical to assume that the influence of each of these persons varied from manuscript to manuscript and perhaps even from painting to painting within a manuscript. This variation of influences must primarily have been due to the patron—the Emperor and perhaps important princes and princesses—whose interest in any one manuscript naturally must have varied as these projects often lasted a number of years. The variable levels of interference in a manuscript's production by a patron necessarily must have led accordingly to an increased influence on the pictorial outcome of a work of art by supervisor or artist. The role of supervisors has been researched by John Seyller who mentions that in many manuscripts artists were given basic instructions on what to paint in the form of scribal notes. See John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India.*

The Freer Ramayana and Other Illustrated Manuscripts of 'Abd al-Rahim (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1999), 82 and Seyller, *Pearls from the Parrot of India*, 113. The fact that these scribal notes were basic supports the idea that the artist followed a given convention signified by the generalisation of information inherent in the scribal note. Or it may well be that the scarcity of information in the scribal note forced the artist to use a type and that this was accepted practice. There are also notes describing Mughal classifications for paintings, see John Seyller, 'The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts in the Imperial Mughal Library', in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. LVII, 3 / 4, 243-349. The classifications, one assumes, are post-production judgments and do not account for the patrons' interest in, or the efforts expended over the process of production. Apart from this ever complex evaluation of intellectual property, or indeed authorship connected with Mughal paintings, one needs to consider how available images were for studio supervisors and artists to allow them to develop an aesthetic consistent with tradition. The process of assembling albums containing images from many Persian schools meant that several artists and supervisors were exposed to the art of the past. We do not know that subsequent access to these completed albums or prized manuscripts stored in the imperial library were allowed or forbidden. Neither do we know if it was part of an artist's training to copy older masters' works, although it is probable that it was and that like oral history, its mechanisms have vanished into the mists of time. Artists did work in teams and often with calligraphers, as the paintings in the margin of the Gulshan Album and in various colophons of manuscripts show us. We also know that artists worked with visual conventions sustained by this artistic association, which was part of the artistic *modus operandi*, and it was probable that this work was quality checked by a studio supervisor who mediated between beginning and completion of any one work (either, both, or neither of which were closely linked to the patron's involvement in every painting circumstance). There were undoubtedly many sketches and efforts shared by artists. There are numerous examples of earlier Persian manuscripts that have been repainted by Mughal artists; this surely was the easiest way to obtain a familiarity with earlier compositional forms. Mughal artists also copied numerous Mughal paintings of earlier generations, even of their contemporaries. And when it comes to the issue of how, or whether, artists had access to Persian illustrations; it takes only one glimpse of a visual style, aspect, or a composition by one artist to influence his work and for him to pass it on to another, and so on. This is the nature of an artist's skill universally: artists possess "photographic" memories when it comes to retrieving geometric and chromatic structures even of the most intricate paintings, and this visual (as opposed to oral) tradition can be relayed from one artist to another in an instant, this is the economy of vision.

[164]See John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India*, 82-84, also referred to "stock compositional types" 316.

[165]Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, 136.

[166] This geometry is in a dynamic relationship with colour: "Each coloured surface, along with the decorative motif overlying it, is caught up in innumerable relationships of this order with all the other coloured surfaces and decorative motifs. This sets up an immense polyphony of topological relationships, which is similar to modern painting." Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art*, 111.

CHAPTER THREE

READING MYTH

The pictorial language of Mughal painting is not restricted to a formal and aesthetic vocabulary. Enriching this pictorial language is the recurrent use of certain painterly conventions that can predispose the viewer to recognise subject matter and to create meaning. Chapter Three focuses on the use and re-use of pictorial conventions over a large number of paintings and examines these not as evidence for a lack of innovation or creativity, but as a form of communication between artist and viewer. The rather one-dimensional interpretation of the subject matter or themes of Persian or Mughal painting by art historians often brings to mind attitudes to children's illustrated books, folk tales and fairy stories, which maintain that these are simple narratives with little need of complex literary investigation.[1] A similar attitude prevails in regard to Persian and by implication, Mughal painting.[2] The problem with identifying the subject matter of Mughal paintings solely with the text associated with them is to reduce their function to a rather mechanical one of servicing the story, and conversely, the text is anchored in the painting at the expense of any freedom of interpretation. Indeed, these logocentric naming exercises have now become the titles of individual paintings restricting them further to the *sensus litteralis*. This view traduces both text and painting, because by reading the text through the painting in order to identify the subject matter of the painting, the allusions, metaphors and tropes of the text are neglected or ignored. It may be demonstrated on a number of occasions that Mughal paintings interact with and attempt to reflect the complexity of literary devices and other aspects of higher order thought rather than function solely as simple narration. The identification of subject matter with basic narrative forms in texts (actions, identities and events, not allusions or metaphors) reduces both text and painting to a crude model of storytelling.[3] But both text and painting indicate complex polysemic possibilities. Painting plays an important role in generating visual recognition of old stories, and so what purports to be a mimetic act of innocently recording the visible world or illustrating a text is also the retracing and re-presenting of familiar uses of space and meaning. By inheriting this sense of placement the artist painted the world around him (or her) and the stories that were required for illustration through a mesh of traditional ordering principles.[4] These intervene between nature and art as a tradition of psycho-geography mapped

into painting. The viewer may be used to reading both content and form intertextually and interpictorially, in both cases, utilising previous experiences of other pictures.[5] Past experience is superimposed over the present.[6] It is reasonable to assume that some artists were aware of the need for this kind of recognition, deployed as a way of making visual processing and communication easier. To others, this visual recurrence was perhaps, an outgrowth of something more subliminal. Copying is also re-performance and sets up a competition with past masters. Competition is itself a form of myth. Such a re-creation may be felt (or more consciously perceived) as a form of cyclical time, where the skills of past masters may be transmuted or seen through the works and actions of the present.[7] The actual practice of copying earlier works, performative acts of the present, must have encouraged a sense of artistic archetypes, if not other, more significant and elevated ones, intelligible to discerning viewers, or more self-aware artists. What we will never really know is the where to draw the line between simple copying and the beliefs inherent in ritual renewal, or whether to draw the line at all. But sometimes, there are visual clues that help us to identify the various forms of myth arising from the encounter of text and image.

One of the ways that the text and the painting may be seen to be much more than simple storytelling is to use Panofsky's art historical method to go beyond simplistic descriptions of paintings.[8] There is also the example of the literary theory of intertextuality where texts and traditions of storytelling share a system of references, mythemes and theologemes that form meaning when recombined in new contexts.[9] This concept may be applied to the visual arts. In this chapter, I demonstrate that these mythemes can also be visual, and that these engage with those described in texts. These cooperative processes create new meaning beyond the limitations of the plot or simple description of the image. Intertextuality examines the structured dialogues between a text and other texts, forming diverse readings of the text itself. This approach has been applied to non-Western cultures and to the composite art form of illustrated books.[10] The educated reader in many historical periods undoubtedly enjoyed not only the repatterning of familiar stories but also the richness of a design that involves reading one text through the other *and* visual references to this intertextuality. This creates the prospect of several levels of significance across media and complements the layering of formal and aesthetic structures described in Chapter Two.

One of the best examples of this layering of significance is in the poet Amir Khusrau Dihlavi's thirteenth century story of Bahram Gur, which is an intertextual synthesis of Sassanian history, Arabian storytelling, traditions connected both to the *Qur'an* and astrology and Firdausi's accounts of Bahram Gur in the tenth century and Nizami's in the twelfth.[11] Thus the story of Bahram Gur in its various forms has a rich intertextuality because his journey and the

events and trials leading to his triumphs allude to this rich background of Sassanian, prophetic and cosmic symbolism with references to earlier poetic traditions. It is possible to read the tale of the ascendancy of Bahram Gur through his trials as an allegory for the Prophet Muhammad's ascent, the *mi'raj*, on the mythical animal, *Buraq* (in Arabic, 'lightning') an animal often depicted in paintings as having a woman's head and the body of a woman. Both figures pass by the seven planets with their seven colours and both attain spiritual wisdom of a higher order. What allows the reader to approach this polysemy, the layering of allusions of this tale, is leaving behind the sense of the literal, which cannot go beyond the superficial reading of one story. Intertextuality is both a literary device and a reading process: it may creatively synthesise well established narrative patterns that remain recognisable despite modifications. Painting may be shown to do the same: it references pre-existent pictorial languages to tell its "story" by calling up the memory of other images and their visual structures. Thus for example, a Mughal painting of Bahram Gur and the seven princesses in an illustrated copy of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi's *Khamsa* shows them bowing down to him, as figures often do, towards prophets such as Adam. In another painting, one of the characters of the story[12] is surrounded by fairies with wings which references the astral symbolism of the Prophet Muhmmad's *mi'raj*, where he is usually portrayed surrounded by angels with trays. There are many paintings of the Mughal emperors, particularly Shah Jahan, that are surrounded by margin paintings of angels bestowing gifts upon the emperor, a crown, gold trays, a sword or arrows which also remind us of the frontispieces of many books which depict the prophet's *mi'raj* in similar ways.

The *Shah-nama* is full of cyclical structures that are also intertextual or are related to other parts of the same text. Such repeats are not merely intertextual references but provide the viewer with the sense of cultural memory and archetypes seen through different moments in history, and so also with painting. Paintings parallel these imitative literary structures with their own visual repetitions. In cruder forms, there are countless visual and literary repetitions of father killing son, and royal sons raised by wise men not knowing the identities of their fathers. And generations apart, both heroes Rustam, Isfandiyar and Bahram Gur have to struggle through seven trials or stages; as in the tales of Hercules; but also, Isfandiyar slays two lions, as does Bahram Gur and there are many examples of these kinds of repeats, but some of them are more skilfully deployed. This intertextual parallel in painting may be called interpictorial referencing, signified by figural arrangements or other recurrent motifs that refer to earlier examples or deal with similar subjects.[13] Paintings refer to paintings as precedents; they are linked together by the repetition of compositional conventions, or by the reworking of symbols in new contexts.[14] These references form part of the visual language of both viewer and artist[15] and most

importantly, they allow for the transmission of aspects of wisdom traditions, often in the form of mythemes transferred from generation to generation by the continuing resonance of their substructures. Characters and events can be re-named, events re-sequenced or given new political or ideological slants but substructures of the story, with concomitant semantic reverberations, persist. Some of these substructures are visible in paintings and can be revealed by interpictorial study. If the structural patterns of a story can be made visible by comparing and contrasting texts, so can the structural patterns in painting, which can be brought out by the analysis of visual conventions across several painting traditions. In this way, formal identification of a painting's subject is only one small part of what the painting "is about".

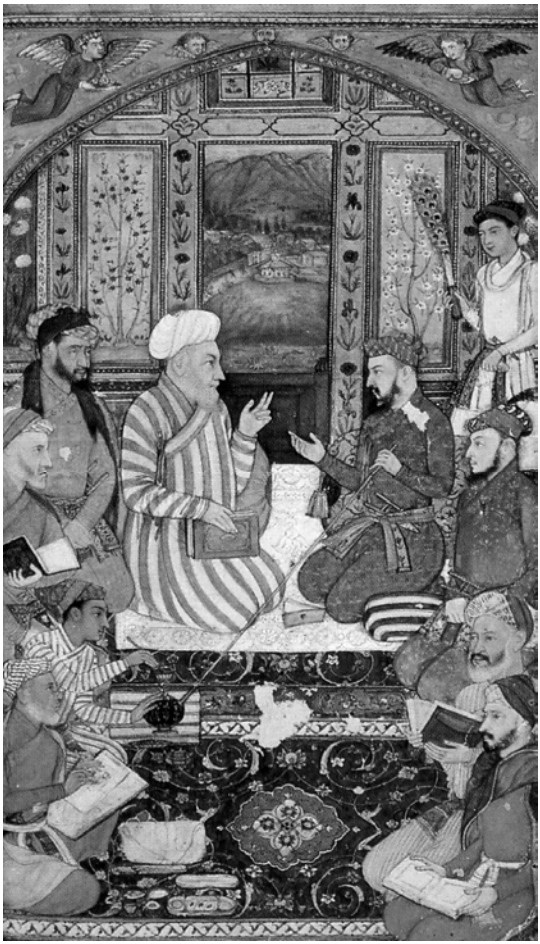
Revealing visual tradition through the comparative and inferential methods of intertextuality mirrors the range of interpretations historically within the reach of the Mughal reader and viewer of illustrated books. The Mughals read texts and paintings in an intertextual fashion. The evidence for this is the recurrent themes and formal principles that emerge from structuralist and poststructuralist analyses of texts and paintings.[16] These formal conventions, which are often interlinked, are accessible to the modern reader and viewer of Mughal illustrated books. It is reasonable to assume that such themes and the visual language employed to 're-present' them were significant to the Mughals at some level, unless they had a penchant for the recurrence of visual and semantic redundancies.

In the second part I have tried to introduce into the study of Mughal art consideration of the subliminal impulses of mythical thought and their role in image production and reception. I have tried to do this using some of Mircea Eliade's formulations and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* as a "system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception."[17] This includes learned habits, skills, tastes and judgments used in image production which may cooperate with or work beneath the level of ideological manipulation.

Recognising Dialogue

In Chapter Two an analysis of pictorial compositions based on the hexagon and the hexagram revealed certain thematic consistencies to do with formal meetings at court, and displays of both temporal and spiritual balance and power. This hexagonal arrangement of figures has a more specific expression the subgenre of paintings to do with depicting seated scholars,[18] an interpictorial tradition that reaches back to earlier Persian art. In the Mughal period, the painting of disputing physicians **Fig. 1.4** carefully conforms not only to the tradition of hexagonal figural arrangements for scholars but it also re-presents

both spatially and semantically the residual "myth" of the scholarly debate. It is an archetypal debate over scripture, reinforced by the painting in the background showing an angel delivering god's word in the form of a vision (based on a European original) and which is being written down.



3.1 *Zafar Khan with poets and scholars*

The disputing physicians argue about this truth and determine it through trial by ordeal, by taking poison. The poison (the poisoned rose) is a false representation, a form of rhetoric, through which the truth (the antidote)

emerges. All of these elements: poison, the truth, dialectical debate, writing, representation and rhetoric evident here, are originally to be found in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Jacques Derrida's detailed interpretation of that work explains the complex imagery which, indirectly, may throw some light on the Neo-Platonic elements in Nizami's tale.[19] In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates retells the myth of Oreithyia, taken away by the wind Boreas while playing with Pharmacia. Derrida remarks that the Greek word "Pharmacia" refers also to "pharmakon" (the imagery of which is applied throughout *Phaedrus* by Plato), which signifies "recipe"; "drug" and, paradoxically, both "poison" and "antidote". The equivocal meaning of this word is exploited by Plato and used as a metaphor for the relationship between the truth and various "representations" of it. Writing (and by extension, rhetoric) are representations of the truth but they can also, dangerously, lead to a diversion from the path of truth (given that they are devices which describe reality by using fictional scenarios, metaphors, tropes, allegories), and Derrida notes that at the beginning of the dialogue Socrates is led away from the city and into the country by the lure of the written texts in the possession of Phaedrus. Writing and rhetoric are necessary evils by which the truth may be known, a dialectic process through which truth emerges, a pharmakon, which can be both a poison and a cure (both true and untrue). The imagery of the story of the disputing physicians also utilises these elements. The picture of writing in the background of St. Matthew writing the word of god delivered by the angel denotes the archetypal origin of the writing myth (the logos-*kalima*) which is disputed by different faiths or disputed between the theological (*mutakallimun*) and philosophical (*filasafa*) traditions of reading the *Qur'an*. Through the poison/cure of the dialectics of argument, and the different ways in which the truth can be represented, the truth emerges. It is thus possible, using pictorial deconstruction in the way that Derrida deconstructs Plato, to see this painting, which uses poison and the truth/representation duality as an illustration of both literal *and* figural aspects of Nizami's story, intertextually related to Platonic traditions. The painting may also be seen to deal with the complex relationship between the truth and its representation.

Repeated visual patterns, the kind that we have seen in the example of the disputing physicians, signal the reappearance in art history not only of formal characteristics but narrative contexts associated with these. In the case of the disputing physicians, one message this visual pattern conveys in its various reappearances is the emergence of truth or wisdom through cultural or ideological confrontation, ordeal, or debate between wise men, the archetypal expression of dialecticism. The continuity of narrative associations is thus assured by their representation in intertextual stories as a visual, spatial pattern which arranges symmetrically the two sets of opposing figures. A hierarchy of spatial arrangements occurs also with lower and higher, centre and peripheral

figures, to which we may assume, are attached degrees of value and importance. The appearance of this spatial pattern in a painting would have been recognised automatically as the configuration that signifies a debate or ideological confrontation or poetic competition in order to establish the truth.[20] The fact that recognisable figural arrangements may be seen as qualia and carry meaning has been established as a principle in European art, also.[21] In the disputing physicians the figural arrangement suggests a hexagonal shape and emphasises symmetry, stress and counter-stress suggesting that the symmetry (and the tension) is resolved.

The tradition of using this largely symmetrical composition for scholarly discussion may be seen much earlier in Persian fifteenth century painting.[22] A 1485 Persian painting of mystics discoursing in a garden[23] shows all the typical features of the visual pattern reproduced centuries later in the seventeenth century by the Mughal painter Bishan Das, who painted Zafar Khan and his brother debating with scholars and poets, **Fig. 3.1**, sharing remarkably similar features with the other pictures mentioned here, along with a similar background view of heads and angels on surrounding arches, also seen in the British Library painting of disputing physicians (compare **Fig. 1.4**). Note also, that the figural arrangement in **Fig. 3.1** can be construed as a diamond shape and there are some interesting diagonals suggested by the placement of the arms of figures, whereas the shared gazes of many figures make us aware of the horizontal registers of the pictorial space. Many paintings by the Mughal artist Payag of holy men or mystics continue the convention even later into the seventeenth century.

This spatial composition is used also in various adversarial depictions in addition to those of religious or philosophical debate centuries earlier: in poetry contests it has been used as a fitting way to paint famous poets with their entourages; for portraying games of chess, and even a game of backgammon.[24]There are Persian illustrations dating from the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries of the prophet Muhammad with followers;[25] scholars and poets surrounding Jami,[26] Nizami,[27] Sa'di,[28] Plato[29] as well as Iskandar discovering a group of scholars fainting[30] or mystics discoursing in a garden.[31] Another painting of the poet Firdausi, from a Persian manuscript dated 1572[32] is repeated in a Mughal painting in the seventeenth century.[33] The painting of the disputing physicians and Zafar Khan with scholars (**Figs. 1.4**, **3.1**) must be seen in this interpictorial context as a recurrent visual and semantic pattern.[34]

The central figures are often shown on the same level as each other which forms one facet of a hexagon with other figures flanking the central ones, as in a late fifteenth century Persian painting of Jami seated with friends.[35] Related to this is a variation where one, rather than two, figures is placed at the centre of a group flanked symmetrically by two or three figures[36] Whereas the former composition emphasises an unresolved conflict or encounter, in the latter type,

where a single figure is seated at the centre, harmony, or a resolution is brought about by the presence of this one, central figure, usually identified as a leader or famous poet, balancing and mediating each side.[37]One instance of the spatial arrangement may invite comparisons with other examples sharing this similar spatial composition in other contexts. And although each painting may use the same composition to illustrate different stories about scholars' debates, poetic competitions and mystics locked in an ordeal of fire or poison, the powerful semantic pattern of "the discourse" of dialectical movement remains. Hence the recurring narrative or archetype of "the search for truth" emerging from the dialectics of argument along with its spatial and therefore mental, compartments, a visual psycho-geography which is continually re-instantiated.[38] The visual structure is recognisable; it establishes familiarity and extends interpictorial traditions. Moreover, the fact that a form of dialectic argument is being represented in all these cases shows the painting tradition to be an "image of thought", that is, of dialectics in the pursuit of truth.

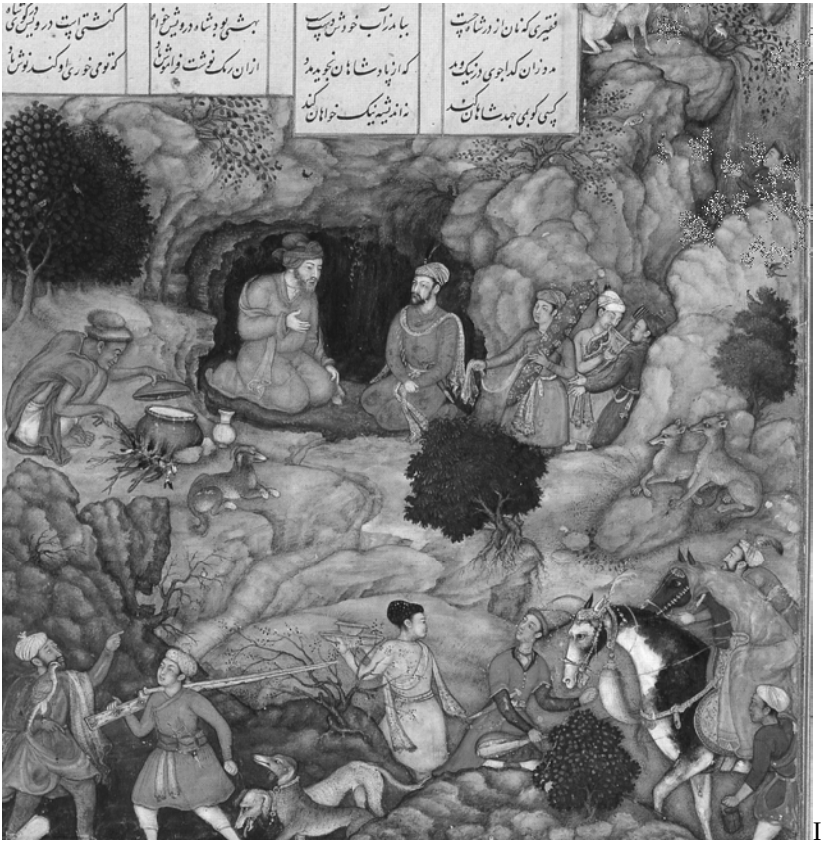
Similarly, one may see the events at the Mughal debating chamber where Jesuit encountered Muslim through the myth of the disputing physicians and through the traditional ways of visualising encounters. The performative act re-creates the original, mythic act summoned to the present event by the reuse of pictorial conventions, bringing the archetype to mind.[39]

Recognising Spiritual Illumination

When the Emperor Akbar sought an audience with Shaykh Salim Chisthi, "a far-seeing sage"[40] reputed to live in a cave,[41] he requested that the saint intercede with god on his behalf to grant him a male heir. Not only did this appear to be a sincere wish, he was also participating in one of the appropriate historical actions of kingship enshrined in myth and immortalised in the image of the audience of the king with the sage, and no doubt, deeply inscribed in the emperor's psyche. Another composition found in Mughal art modelled on Persian precedents depicts Iskandar, or various princes or kings in his guise, visiting a hermit in a cave in a rocky landscape far from court. There are examples that survive of the basic composition of rulers with holy men from Il-Khanid and Timurid eras.[42] A groom who tends his horse and his bodyguards usually accompanies the prince.[43] The visual form of this oral tradition may be traced also in a Persian *Khamsa* 1494-95[44]and in Shah Tahmasp's *Diwan* of Hafiz dating from the mid-1550s.

In the Akbar period, there is a composition of the king visiting a hermit in a loose leaf of a *Diwan* of Shahi.[45] In the Chester Beatty Library there are three comparable paintings. In the *Akbar-nama* (c.1593),[46] Akbar kneels before a sage; in the '*Iyar-I Danish* there is an illustration entitled, *The Impetuous King*

and the Dervish[47] and another example, *Akbar Visits Baba Bilas*.[48] There is also a *Prince Visiting a Hermit* c. 1580, attributed to ‘Abd al-Samad.[49] It should not surprise us that in the SOAS *Sharaf-nama*, originally part of a larger *Khamsa*, Iskandar bears a marked resemblance to Akbar himself.[50] This was perhaps an attempt to associate Akbar's interest in spiritual issues with Iskandar's legendary spiritual quest but also to refer to the Salim Chisthi episode as one that is a recurrence of tradition: legendary kings seek the advice of holy men and the conventions used to depict this strengthen the perception that we are dealing with traditional behaviour and form a parallel, reinforcing visual tradition. These pictures are then shown to young princes during their education and perpetuate the ideals of heroic and noble behaviour.



3.2. *Iskandar (Alexander the Great) visiting Aflatun (Plato)*

In another painting of Iskandar (Alexander the Great) visiting Aflatun (Plato) **Fig. 3.2** in the Akbar period *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, [51]and as in the SOAS painting, Iskandar wears saffron robes and a turban and is attended by a retinue of bodyguards, one bearing his sword, another with a matchlock resting on his shoulder, there is yet another with a bow and arrow, one with a shield and the last holds the reins of Iskandar's horse. This conforms to the pattern of representing the scene in a majority of the examples showing Akbar mentioned above[52] and in the SOAS painting. In many examples the sage sits on a tiger skin (here he is showing on the left wearing a fur skin coat which is meant to show his acetic life style). In the background of **Fig. 3.2**, a youth cups his hands to fill them with water under a small waterfall. In the SOAS painting, there is a semi-naked Hindu servant in a gesture of reverence holding a gold jug of water, pressing it to his forehead. In both paintings, this detail suggests the idea of the water of life which is part of Iskandar's quest in the last part of his chronicle. In **Fig. 3.2** and in other examples, we also have the addition of a fire, where a servant is cooking a meal; this aspect is also a reference to esoteric knowledge, the civilising quality of the fire, the cooked, is equated with spiritual maturity. In later periods the king visiting the sage in his cave is still a favourite way to show the ruler listening to the voice of wisdom passed down from generation to generation. Jahangir had himself depicted doing just this in *Jahangir Visiting the Ascetic Jadrup*, c. 1616-1620 ascribed to Govardhan.[53] Here, as in many other examples, the encounter is shown physically and metaphorically above or at the centre of the painting, isolated from the rest of the world, while the attendants of the king wait for him in the lower register and on the periphery of the narrative, and by implication excluded from the privilege of an audience with the sage.

In the paintings of emperors meeting shaykhs or Sufis, which often deliberately share spatial schemes, the cave appears almost as a peripheral yet consistent element in the visual play.[54] There are numerous literary references that repeat the image of the cave where people seek refuge or receive initiation, wisdom or revelation. The Prophet Muhammad's first revelation from Jibrail (Gabriel) was said to have occurred in a cave at Mount Hira. To this, we may also add Plato's famous cave metaphor, known to the Persians[55] and to the Mughals through Nasiruddin al-Tusi's *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (Nasirean Ethics) and seen in an illustration of Alexander visiting Plato in a mountain cave to be told of his imminent death in the *Ai'n-i Iskandari* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi.[56] The cave was also the place where Mani was supposed to have written his *artang* or *arzhang*, his sacred text with pictures.[57]

3.3 *Civilised lady offering a cup of tea to a tribal Bhil*

The cave as a signifier transmutes over time but it remains the source of spiritual illumination, dark to the physical eye but illuminating to the mind's eye. Much later in 1830, there is a painting an Ayurvedic practitioner taking the pulse of a patient. Behind him is a dark archway that functions as a subliminal reminder of the cave/womb, an appropriate backdrop for viewing the practitioner/sage.[58] The cave in this context and in the context of the king visiting sages is to provide a contrast between dark/light, internal/external, otherworldly/worldly, and the sacred/profane revealed/concealed and by implication, esoteric and exoteric knowledge. The cave is seen as a source of superior, intuitive knowledge, contrasted with worldly ways, etiquette and civilisation, this is clearly suggested in an early seventeenth century painting of a meeting of a civilised lady offering a cup of tea to a tribal Bhil dressed in a garment of leaves **Fig. 3.3**.[59]

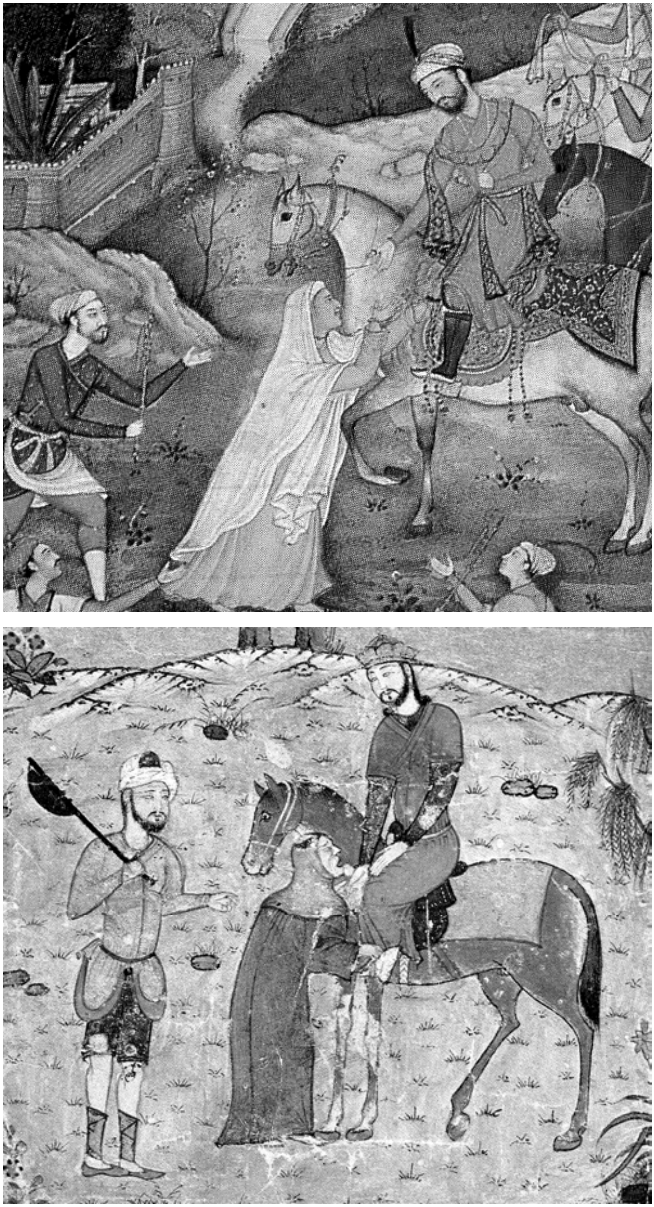
In the *Shah-nama* both Rustam and Bizhan find themselves in a pit, which is in itself a motif that links intertextually with the story of Yusuf, who is thrown into a pit or well by his brothers. The parallels with the cave are interchangeable. The cave, pit or prison or any other confinement inside a dark space consistently signify a trial, a suspension of normal time, knowledge, reality, as they do in the Christian tradition with the entombment of Christ and Yunus (Jonah) within the stomach of the whale. Alexander lowered into the sea (in a diving bell) stems from the conceptual form of ordeal or spiritual journey from symbolic death and burial to resurrection. In this sense, the sage-cave image and indeed, images of Khizr and the water of life depicted in close proximity to a cave, conjure up associations with the after life and the source of spiritual illumination and belief, mediated by the sage, the 'gatekeeper' to the cave. Linking the important mythic elements Khizr, the cave, the well of life and Alexander is a miniature in a Mughal *Shah-nama*.[60] The cave is the opposite of the open space (the exoteric), it is where secrets, wealth, esoteric knowledge lie, waiting to be brought out into the open. They are also places that are dangerous to the uninitiated. Caves are places of refuge and like the womb are dark places from where both life and knowledge originate. The cave is pre-civilisational and is represented as a domus, the ascetic life, apart from, turning its back on the material world. Any or all of these semantic associations were operative in the Mughal psyche and available as predispositions or reminders during the viewing of paintings. Ian Netton has done a study on the significance of the cave metaphor which he calls a 'theologeme' a nexus of meaning that can be recombined in different contexts to yield different shades of meaning in Islamic theology.[61] My contribution to this particular discourse is to have demonstrated that this theologeme can also be visually apparent, and it can also be recombined in different contexts, as the cave has been used here, to generate new layers of intertextual meaning.

Recognising Mercy

Numerous other spatial and figural conventions in Mughal painting reflect the use of interpictorial traditions to articulate resilient semantic values and there is evidence that the Persians before them practiced this very process. A spatial configuration used to portray a king or sultan's contact with the people and the right of individuals to seek redress for injuries and the oppression caused by injustice is based on early Persian illustrations of the story of the Sultan Sanjar and the old woman in the *Khamsa* of Nizami. An old woman manages to slip by the Sultan's bodyguards to grab hold of the Sultan's stirrup to complain bitterly that he has lost his sense of justice and is out of touch with the people. The spatial arrangements of the paintings illustrating this story emphasise a high and exalted position (the king on a horse) and a low one (the subject on foot close to the king's stirrup) but it is also a way of showing that the emperor lowers his head or hand towards the person on foot addressing him or her and meeting them half way. The subject is represented in no less than twenty-six *Khamsa* manuscripts in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul, and nine times in manuscripts in the British Library, all with a shared, easily identifiable pictorial language. This is also one of the finest illustrations in the British Library *Khamsa* **Fig. 3.4**.

The gestures of the principal figures and the overall composition are comparable to the earliest versions of the illustration. Sultan Sanjar on horseback reaches down to an old woman who reproaches him for the misbehaviour of his army. Behind her, also on foot, is the Sultan's groom and behind him are several attendants on horseback.

By the mid-sixteenth century, many illustrated *Khamsa*s developed increasingly elaborate versions of the scene.[62] The Tabriz *Khamsa* (c.1539-43) has a busy retinue of court attendants, one of them a macebearer, another, the prince's falconer, and the last holding a parasol.[63] These also feature in the same illustration in the Mughal *Khamsa*. In another earlier *Khamsa*, dated 1494-95 painted in Herat, which was bought by the Mughals and kept in the imperial library, the composition is in the same tradition as its later Mughal counterpart.[64] An illustration of the scene in a manuscript painted in Bukhara in the middle of the sixteenth century shows the attendant walking away, looking back on the encounter between the sultan and the petitioner.[65] This is one of the most repeated elements, right up to Jahangir period examples. Other elements that are repeated are the attendant holding a parasol; there is also a gold background (transformed in the Indian context to a sunset of orange) and flowers strewn all over the ground.



3.4 *(Above) Sultan Sanjar 1593-95*
3.5 *(Below) Sultan Sanjar 1386-88*

A Persian *Khamsa* dated 1512[66] features the convention of the parasol held over the monarch, not required in the text but evident in subsequent manuscripts even 150 years later in Mughal version. Another repeated detail is the white shawl of the old woman and the gesture of the Sultan who offers her his right hand leaning over the left side of the horse. The same convention is present in the Mughal *Khamsa* and shows that Akbar's artists were familiar with this visual tradition. The woman appears to grasp the Sultan's stirrup violently and to have eluded his macebearer who walks on ahead, looking back in surprise, or in some versions he appears to turn back to escort her to the sultan. In two Mughal *Khamsas* (in the Keir Collection and in the British Library) the macebearer is represented as a foot soldier in short breeches and garters and escorts the old woman to the presence of the king, which also appears to happen in the earliest Persian *Khamsa*, dated 1386-1388, **Fig. 3.5**[67] This is a simple illustration without court attendants turning back and is painted in a manner to be found in compositions around this period and later.

The visual similarities and spatial characteristics and gestures show a visual tradition at work; the artists would not have come up with such a similar *mise en scène* from a description of the verse alone. It has been shown that the figural arrangement of the Sultan Sanjar is primarily an interpictorial tradition that bears little relation to the text, which does not describe the sultan mounted when he meets the old woman. Artists illustrating other stories must have borrowed the compositional formula from visual examples. This further goes to show that artists followed a visual tradition of semantic renewal often signifying an archetype that underpins various stories. The use of this generic image amounts to a judgment as to its appropriateness for certain episodes. Yet the structure of this visual convention was transplanted into different narrative contexts. The basic composition and ingredients of the illustration of the Sultan Sanjar and the old woman were used in a variety of different contexts to signify the rights of redress of a downtrodden subject forced to seek an impromptu audience with the king. The illustration in the Shiraz style *Gulistan* of Sa'di, 1513, often referred to as a Prince waylaid riding to the polo ground[68] shares a similar composition with the illustrations of the Sultan Sanjar scene described above, except that the old woman has been replaced by a man and members of the prince's entourage carry polo mallets. An early fifteenth century illustration from a Shiraz *Shah-nama* uses the same composition but illustrates the story of another ruler, this time, Anushirvan conversing with a peasant.[69] Even earlier is an illustration in the Baghdad *Khamsa* of Khwaju Kirmani of 1396 where Malikshah ibn Alp Arslan, the Saljuq ruler has been represented on horseback in an identical composition, instead of Sultan Sanjar, but in reverse. This reversal of the composition indicates that at some point a painting was 'pounced.'[70]

The Sultan Sanjar composition is used for the story of Yusuf and Zulaykha, where Yusuf is confronted by Zulaykha, she shows that her love for him still grows and in return, he transforms her into a young woman. The well-known pictorial convention helps us to read the painting. The composition in this case, as in all the others, serves to emphasise the higher social position of the figure on horseback compared to the figure, usually a woman, on foot. In the story of Yusuf and Zulaykha, this social status remains but to this is added moral superiority. Yet Zulaykha, nevertheless, has a right to approach him because of her loyalty to him, and even though the relationship is not one of equals they are still bound by it and in most illustrations the figure on horseback tilts his head slightly in gesture of benevolence and mercy. Yusuf here is seen not only as a prophet but also as a secular ruler on horseback, as the Sultan Sanjar would be seen listening to his subjects.[71]

In the painting in the British Library *Khamsa*, **Fig. 3.4** the basic Persian composition remains strikingly familiar, despite some elaborations with more attention given to landscape, which suggests autumn, and gesture, with figures portrayed in the heat of the moment running excitedly with hands in the air. In the Mughal copy of the *Baharistan* (poems of *The Spring Garden* by Jami), 1595, in the Bodleian Library exactly the same composition is used for the subject of the king who asks the dervish why he no longer comes in attendance. Another example appears in the *Chingiz Khan-nama* the Akbar period History of Chingiz Khan produced to enhance the Mughal rulers' sense of continuity with their great Mongol ancestry. All the illustrations in this manuscript show events of the past in the guise of Mughal dress, court etiquette and painting style. The same details and composition in paintings of Sultan Sanjar are used again in a *Chingiz Khan-nama* painting of *Ghazan Khan Meeting a Young Girl by a Stream*.[72] The story is a similar complaint of injustice as in the Sanjar episode, but this time perpetrated by the Turkish mercenaries of Ghazan Khan, the Il-Khanid ruler of Persia. Thus, again, the configuration is used for illustrations of different stories[73] but always to show the king high on his horse and the servant lower down on foot, responsive, benevolence and mercy is contrasted with brave, impetuous pleading from a position of desperation or righteousness, on the other.

In the Jahangir period, perhaps the most surprising re-use or re-mythologising of this composition is a miniature from the *Diwan* of Hafiz where the Emperor Jahangir is shown in a typical Sultan Sanjar composition, right down to the archaising groom striding forward yet looking behind, and the high horizon, as in a majority of previous examples mentioned above. An angel holding on to his stirrup, however, has replaced the old woman. The interpictorial references (referring back to a compositional 'template') invite comparisons with the Sanjar story. The placement of the groom looking back

and the style of his dress support the view that there is a deliberate referencing to the well-established Sultan Sanjar pictorial tradition and the implication is that Jahangir is a "re-appearance" of the great sultan (a title he adopted during his period of rebellion against the Emperor Akbar). The verse accompanying the illustration claims that Jahangir is the defender of the faith with heaven's support and the pictorial convention suggests that even if the angels were to complain of Jahangir's power and justice, he listens to them.[74] As in the system of precedents in the law, only by reference to the past do immediate or local events and actions acquire substance and meaning and this is also the case in art. The action, event, or personality in the present is not recorded in the modern sense of historical documentation but transformed into another version of the archetype. Not only is the personality or event provided a context or justification by way of the archetype, but also, precedents endow it with further sanctity and meaning. A judgment by an artistic supervisor, patron, or artist at some stage had to be made as to which composition was appropriate for the arrangement of a particular scene. As the richness of meaning in the various deployments in the Mughal period of the archaic Sultan Sanjar configuration increases through comparative study of its earlier uses, it is clear that this appropriateness was partly to do with the pursuit of semantic convergence and expansion and partly, aesthetic imitation. It seems important in all examples that essential elements are repeated: royal personage and subject, man and woman, high and low, young and old, strong and vulnerable, listening and speaking, access and non-access, the joining of the gaze, the meeting of hand and foot (stirrup) and a series of other oppositions and liminal transactions are evoked in this image.

Recognising Wisdom

Both in Persian and Indian painting traditions there are many scenes of wise men in discussion with kings. The usual way to portray these scenes is to have the king seated on a throne at the centre or to the right, never to the left in the picture space. The dynamic is asymmetrical as opposed to the open dialogue form, which, as we have seen, is largely symmetrical. The sages or courtiers in his company are usually placed in descending order, in a diagonal line from the sovereign's head down to his right hand side. This is the composition used in Persian paintings depicting kings and advisors. A good example of this is Iskandar with seven sages in a *Khamsa* from Shiraz, mid-sixteenth century.[75]

This is the kind of composition that underpins scenes of Iskandar before the seven sages and is common in Mughal paintings that portray a king receiving advice from his vizier or other advisors.[76] In the British Library *Khamsa*, this format is also adopted. In this illustration, the diagonal line formed by the sages leads up to the point of Iskandar's head, implying a hierarchy of knowledge

leading up to Iskandar. The court scene has Mughal details, featuring Mughal dress, and an attendant flicking his flywhisk and other members of the court entourage such as falconers and sword bearers. In a folio from a copy of the *Diwan* of Hafiz, Rampur, c.1585, f. 177, painted by Farrukh Chela, a seated prince converses with learned sages who are arranged in a diagonal line leading up to the apex of the prince's head. The same composition, with perhaps a deliberate attempt to draw parallels with compositions showing Iskandar with the sages, is used to represent Akbar in a scene showing an evening discussion at the '*ibadatkhana* (debating hall) where, amongst sages to the right of Akbar, there are two Jesuits.[77] This we have to view as a historical event portrayed in mythic form, with interpictorial relationships that associate the king being advised by the world's finest philosophers and religious leaders.

In the Jahangir period, the most famous use of the composition is *Jahangir on the Hourglass Throne*[78] where the hierarchy of different branches of knowledge culminating at the apex of the composition with the emperor himself is replaced by a line of figures representing personages from different cultures and by extension symbolising different religions and religious sects: the shaykh at the top, the Turkish sultan, the Christian king and the Hindu artist[79]at the bottom, with Jahangir supreme over all. Notable here, however is the hierarchy of religions of the peoples of the book from preferred Muslim Shaykh to orthodox Muslim, then to Christian king and to Hindu artist carrying an image of a man bowing to an elephant (signifying idolatry).

Related to the compositional schema for depicting sages and carrying semantic values established in Persian art and carried on in Mughal painting is the ritual of presentation at court of shown as a hierarchy to the emperor's right hand side. This composition usually depicts the king at the center of a picture with the author or petitioner to his right but on the left of the illustration creating a strong diagonal. It is used in many different contexts to show the king as a learned patron of literature or religious piety (in the case of book being presented). There appears to be only one Mughal precedent, in the *Hamza-nama*[80] but many subsequent versions, the most famous of which must be the presentation of the Akbar-nama to Akbar by its author, Abu'l Fazl, which also adopts the same compositional schema.[81] As one of the preferred ways of portraying the benevolent and intellectual patronage of the king the composition showing a figure offering up a book to an enthroned ruler persists in Mughal art as late as 1650 in a picture by Hashim, now in the British Library of the Emperor Timur and his descendents (in this case the Mughal emperors) with the famous poet Sa'di holding a book on the left.[82] Even Valmiki in the Mughal *Ramayana* now in the Freer Gallery, Washington was painted reciting the *Ramayana* to an audience in a similar composition.[83] Similar compositions are used for other formal presentations at court.[84]

Painting and Cyclical Time

The famous painting of Jahangir seated on an hourglass throne, possibly one of the most frequently reproduced Mughal painting in modern times, references earlier compositions that offer up a book to a king and where shaykhs and sages offer up wisdom to the ruler. Jahangir makes himself comparable to all other instances of kings in the company of shaykhs or sages but with the difference that here he is interlocutor for the divine word which makes its descent to all the different peoples of the world. The descent of the word represented in this painting brings to mind an archetypal action performed in *illo tempore* much like reading the *Qur'an* was supposed to be a form of actualising narrative.[85] Jahangir is before history began, he is over and above time figuratively, as he is literally seen here seated above time on his hourglass throne.[86]

The legendary stories of Iskandar, Bahram Gur, Faridun and others immortalised in Persian literature were portrayed in Mughal painting as if they were contemporary events happening in the Akbar period. This was done mainly by showing legendary heroes in Mughal dress; by placing basic Persian compositions in recognisably Mughal Indian settings and sometimes by painting a legendary Persian king in the guise of the Mughal Emperor himself. These were fundamental ways of signifying the continuity of the visual tradition from Persian and Timurid origins and the immanence of these legends and stories in Mughal life. By recreating the spatial and figural pictorial schemes of Persian classicism the Mughal artists reinforced a common perception evident in Mughal painting generally, that the Mughals had recreated Persian civilisation in their own image.

The logic behind the reading of these pictures is the conflation of past time with the present in a cyclical structure. The archetype is re-instantiated[87] or memorialised. An element of the "re-presentation" of visual tradition can be seen in the re-enactment of the foundational myths of painting. Making images is a form of re-presenting art as magic and as a source of superstition. And in painting, tracing the designs of the old masters is sometimes analogous to going back to the original archetype of painting itself. Such an attitude to past achievements with the emphasis on reintegrating them into the present context may be seen in the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, where Mani paints the lid of a well **Fig. 3.6**. The archetype of "original" painting is painted over and over again, like a palimpsest. Although this painting is a visual translation of literary hyperbole it also carries with it levels of signification.

3.6 *Mani paints a well cover*

The story relates how the Chinese painted the lid first with ripples of water deceiving Mani who breaks his pitcher on it. He then paints a dead dog over this. But the Mughal artist Sur Gujarati who has painted this picture with Mughal-style figures in the foreground and background also invites judgement about the latest painting in the story—his own—a painting of a painting, of a painting. The myth is painted to include the Mughal artist and his own work in order to re-instantiate the myth of Mani in a Mughal context.[88] Similarly in European art, a tradition of paintings show the lineage of painting as a magical and ancient art when artists painted Apelles or St. Luke, the patron saint of painting, each figure used as a mask for the real artist to wear, a mask showing the superlative image of the artist. This kind of painting shows "the archetypal history of painting as an act."[89]In the Mughal context with the image of Mani painting over another painting is not only the retracing of the myth of painting, it is also the recording of Mani's act and at the same time the act of Sur Gujarati, the Mughal artist whose painting this is.[90]

This sense of re-performance is linked to the highly valued copyist tradition in calligraphy. There was an obvious pride involved in copying European works of art by Jahangir's artists.[91] Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador to the Mughal court was invited to try to tell the difference between European

paintings and Mughal copies of these in a contest reminiscent of the legendary competition between the artists of Chin and Rum placing a real historical event into the context of a legendary one.[92] It was typical of the Mughals to create polysemic displacements such as these, which were encrusted with both contemporary and metaphorical references.[93] This imaginative conflation of legend and lived reality is a quality that can be traced often in Mughal painting when archetypal and paradigmatic events are dressed in the garb of the Mughal epoch, or *vice versa*, when archaising imagery dresses up contemporary events. Painting seen in these ways is sometimes a condensation and at other times a displacement of the text, working with and in metaphor and metonym, extending meaning in the realms of both theory and praxis. These instances of recurrence have a resonance of meaning far greater than other possible episodes, and deeper than their apparent meaning. Paintings have an important part to play in forming and encouraging the visual imagination and preserving cultural memory. They also reach back into the mytho-poetic consciousness of the reader. Seen in this way, painting is no longer inferior to the text but is a form of interpretation of the text, bringing out its resilient archetypal patterning to the external world, engaging with literary form and negotiating in a system of values in the mind of the reader.

Recognising Power

It is well known that Mughal history writing and poetry were used to elaborate ideas of power and authority using a number of repetitive literary devices. In the visual world, various paintings that project images of Mughal kingship and authority also rely on recurrences of formulae. This may be seen in examples of what may be called "visual panegyrics". There are literary and visual precedents for comparing Akbar to Faridun the ancient legendary Iranian king and to Iskandar (Alexander the Great), for example.[94] Depictions of hunting are a form of projecting warrior-authority, and are frequently interpictorial. In the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami, Faridun is painted in the likeness of the Emperor Akbar.[95] However, the story of Faridun and the gazelle is not one revealing unmitigated glory, nor is it a tale of great physical strength. It is rather more a humbling experience. Faridun fails to shoot the gazelle because he admired it so much and because of his mystical love of nature he lets it escape. It is tempting to draw parallels between this story and what we know of Akbar's so-called mystical experience when, in the middle of hunt, he was said to have been overcome with remorse for the captured animals and ordered them to be released.

The traditional image of a monarch hunting on horseback, a convention which the painting of Faridun and the gazelle appears to follow, as well as

various other paintings in the *Akbar-nama* have a long tradition behind them.[96] All the legendary kings, Bahram Gur, Faridun, Gushtasp, Iskandar and Khusrau have been painted hunting and all in some manuscript or other in the same pose.[97] And yet this pose is also often interpictorially related to the mythical killing of the dragon.[98] Akbar-period artists also respected this convention, as there is a single folio of Bahram Gur in the likeness of Akbar fighting a dragon[99] and possibly of another picture of Bahram Gur in the likeness of Akbar as early as 1551-53.[100] Hence Akbar may be seen as the archetypal lord of the hunt, re-performing dynastic and mythical-heroic rituals of kingship, inscribed pictorially for posterity to view, as the Mughals had in their way viewed the feats of the legendary kings passed down to them in pictorial and literary forms.

In written form Akbar was referred to as "the first *Mahdi* (messiah) in grandeur (a cyclical return) and the second Alexander in prowess."[101] On the occasion of his son and heir Jahangir's birth, one of the court historians Bada'oni wrote:

> You would say a star had come to the earth
> That Yusuf had come a second time to the world.[102]

The verse refers to Jahangir's physical appearance, as beautiful as Yusuf (Joseph), who in Jami's poetry turned the heads of Zulaykha's courtiers from their task of slicing fruit with sharp knives, causing them to cut their fingers. Read purely in terms of flattery and rhetoric the verse offers little interest but the underlying substructural constant of these panegyrics is their reference to archetypes recurring. It is too simplistic to regard these examples as cynical manipulations to legitimise rule, neither are they tired rhetoric.[103] They reveal traces of mythical thought—a way of perceiving reality through the imagination.[104] There are numerous other examples based on the same principle of recurrence. In other praises of Jahangir he is referred to as Solomon, and his wife, Nur Jahan as the Queen of Sheba.[105] In later years, Shah Jahan was described as another Solomon and, like Humayun his great-grandfather, as a second Plato and even as the Messiah, expected to return.[106] This is an extension of the imagery used in Akbar's reign. The following description of Akbar's birth comparing it to the birth of Chingiz Khan and Jesus is a remarkable confluence of mythical and religious narratives with Akbar's own official history:

> Alanquva (the mother of Chingiz Khan) was reposing on her bed one night when a glorious light cast a ray into her tent and entered the mouth and throat of that fount of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light in the same way, as did her Majesty Miryam (the Virgin Mary). That day was the beginning of the manifestation of his Majesty the King of kings who after passing through divers [sic] stages was revealed to the world from the holy

> womb of her Majesty Miryam Makani for the accomplishment of things visible and invisible.[107]

This, in turn, is based on a Persian precedent of describing Timur's birth in identical terms.[108]Abu'l Fazl links Alanquva with Akbar's mother, Miryam Makani,[109] and both of them to the Virgin Mary as an indirect way of claiming that the Emperor Akbar's birth was as miraculous as Chingiz Khan's or Christ's. The fact that Akbar renamed his wife, the daughter of the Raja of Amber, 'Miryam az-Zaman' ("Mary of this Era") indicates that encomium took the form of history seen not only as a repeat of archetypes but also as a manifestation of them. Both Miryam and Akbar are examples of the re-intervention in history of the archetypes, the mother revealing the son, making visible or manifest what was previously invisible. The *jharoka* incident described in Chapter One needs to be seen as a form of mythical re-enactment.

Other examples which show an underlying pattern of cyclical history was a belief in the transmigration of souls, yet another way of looking at the imitative nature of visual compositions that portray historical events as repeats. Bada'oni writes that the Emperor Akbar:

> […] became especially firmly convinced of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and he much approved of the saying 'There is no religion in which the doctrine of Transmigration has not a firm hold.'[110]

> Brahmans collected another set of one thousand and one names of 'His Majesty the Sun,' and told the Emperor that he was an incarnation, like Ram, Krishna, and other infidel kings.[111]

History as a narrative in a modern sense is linear but Abu'l Fazl's history is mixed with mythic narrative elements. The underlying implication is that events recur on the basis of an ideal time existing parallel to and outside of the time of history. This accounts for the logic underlying various deliberately anachronistic pictures that place Timur, centuries before Shah Jahan[112] or Jahangir, presenting them with the crown of the Timurids. Abu'l Fazl's great achievement was to infuse Mughal history into mythical narrative using patterns of mythical thought, whether premeditated or not. But in doing so, the court 'historian' reflected the cognitive style of his time, which consisted in giving precedents to many events.[113] Miniatures reflect this cognitive style which has precedents in the *Qu'ran*[114] as they provide similar historical or mythological precedents and recurrences for the events they portray with interpictorial references. The same cognitive structure is exercised in the claim of kings to share in the recurrence of *farr-i shahinshahi*, the ahistorical sacred fire manifest in the nature of

kingship that reappears in a cyclical sense, from time immemorial to the flourishing present of the Mughal aeon.

The depiction of history as a series of comparable or implicitly repeatable events that have archetypal origins is thus made known both in a literary *and* visual sense. The continuity and recycling of the visual pattern of dynastic pictures (a figure flanked by two or four others in a tripartite and pyramidal structure) articulates the ideological proposition of the continuity and recycling of the *farr-i izadi.* The principle behind these portraits is anachronism, which is attached to unnecessarily negative undertones of confusion or eclecticism but actually presupposes an understanding of synchronous time frames, perceived to be co-existent. This is a characteristic of mytho-logic generally, and in its textual and visual expressions requires the illusion of different dimensions and time periods converging into one conceptual experience in the present. This has been called "the analogical method" which "treats events in the past as paradigmatic instances of recurrent situations which throw light on the present."[115] Here, the anthologising mind is able to view past history and the present together, one perfectly superimposed or living side by side with the other. Timur, Babur, Humayun and even Shah Jahan occupy the same pictorial space and time in many pictures. In the same vein, when the artist Govardhan painted two facing pages, one depicting Shah Jahan riding with Dara Shikoh, the other of Timur riding with an attendant in 1638 the obvious repeated figural and spatial organisation of Shah Jahan out riding on the left hand side is repeated on the right with Timur riding, and this articulates both time repeating as well the meeting of past time with present time, strengthened by the artist's revival of an archaic Persian painting style to portray Timur.[116] The contrast between painting styles and time periods also works on the level of contrasting reality co-occurring on different levels, past time in conjunction with present time. This principle is seen in the *The House of Timur,* the earliest dynastic portrait of the Mughal period dating most probably from the mid-sixteenth century but with several later editions.[117] The faces of the central figures (one of them Humayun) have been repainted with the portraits of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan presumably in order for them all to participate in the mythic image of the eternal Mughal dynasty.

In the seventeenth century the anachronistic principle is extended to several paintings as a form of mythologising. In the artist Govardhan's Timur handing his imperial crown to Babur, c. 1630 the emperors are arranged symmetrically (Timur at the centre flanked by Babur to his right and Humayun to his left).[118] Three standing figures of courtiers are arranged below them. This composition has been copied by Bichtr in a painting of Akbar handing his imperial crown to Shah Jahan, c. 1630.[119] The pages were designed to face each other in a mirror reflection, much like the hunting scene. As opposed to some art historical and

rather negative misunderstandings of the re-use of these compositions as staid formulas[120] it is possible to see these recurring compositions more positively as an interpictorial tradition which invites contemplation of the cyclical repetition of archetypes. This kind of visual mythlogising continued to about 1653-54 with a painting depicting Timur, Babur and Humayun in a composition that obviously shares a strong interpictorial relationship to the others.[121] One version references the other, their semantic continuity, the continuity of passing the crown from generation to generation strengthened by the visual continuity that these paintings share, with the implication that the act of passing the crown in one aeon (of three kings) has happened in another.

Another splendid and complex example of this chronological and aesthetic recurrence is a painting showing Timur's Indian princes.[122] This painting represents the lineage of Timurid descendents down to Shah Jahan and Awrangzeb at the bottom left and right of the picture. Not only have anachronisms reappeared but also have the thrones with golden umbrellas, the cusped medallions in the carpet design and the canopy that creates a hexagonal form, the appropriate formal setting for a rich display of power. The network of gazes and in many cases, the carpet designs serve to connect the latter two emperors to others in the semi-circular array with the suggestion of lines formed by the diagonal edges of numerous quatrefoils both form left to right and in the reverse direction.

As with the painting of the disputing physicians **Fig. 1.4** the repetition of pictorial compositions can alert us to the transmission of an original myth, creating a visual familiarity, if not inviting interpictorial comparisons that articulate the conjunction of time frames, one seen through the other. The structural pattern of the composition underlying these images survives because it is re-told as the substructures of stories are retold, and is a process that is part of wider behavioural and conceptual practices. The handing down of jewels from generation to generation, to name but one example, is both an actual and visual co-operation. The mythical renewal of inscribing jewels ("Balas rubies" or spinels) often refers to Shah Jahan as the "second lord of the conjunction", specifically the conjunction of sun and moon, signifying a new age, or an old age come round again. This title refers to one taken by Timur in the carving of his own precious stones. These inscriptions are not merely a perfunctory kind of propaganda.[123] If they were, the audience for such a message remains a mystery, for only the very privileged and the very intimate could read these tiny inscriptions, which are almost impossible to read with the naked eye. The message was presumably intended for future emperors and for posterity[124] and resembles the magic of the charm; an incantation showing the continued belief in *farr-i izadi* and the cognitive mechanism behind the act of inscription is the bringing down of the archetype, Timur, into another aeon. Certainly, the jewel

ceremony was an auspicious sign or ritual and the picture of Jahangir presenting Prince Khurram with a turban ornament shows Jahangir passing on a spinel originally given to Akbar by his mother as a turban ornament to Shah Jahan. In his *Memoirs*, Jahangir describes how he gave his son this flawless ruby:

> This was the ruby Her Majesty Maryam Makani, His Majesty *Arsh-Ashyani* [Akbar's] mother, gave me as a present at my birth. For years it was in his [Akbar's] turban band, and thereafter I too kept it in my turban band for good luck. Aside from its monetary value, since it has been a good luck charm for this eternal dynasty, it was given to my son.[125]

A late Mughal picture, dated 1649 continues the ritual of painting emperors presenting jewels with a picture of Humayun, the second Mughal emperor holding a ruby turban ornament as one side of a most probably double page composition.[126] The artist Payag has painted a picture that evokes early Mughal history to add authority to the present, using the example of the jewel as a symbol for the value that has accrued to the Mughal line generation after generation. The turban ornament takes central place among the other ritual symbols of kingship featured in the margin of this picture: the crown, the golden umbrella and the sword, wrapped in silk brocade. These objects are bestowed upon Shah Jahah by winged cherubs in a portrait of 1629 by Hashim.[127]

Adjuncts to the imperial regalia are the pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary in the background of the painting of Jahangir presenting Prince Khurram with a turban ornament. The artist has most probably recorded the fact that these images (already collector's items) were placed between the brackets of the wall behind the royal balcony, presumably not only because of their aesthetic appeal, but also because of the power of these images to lend continuity, legitimacy and universal appeal to Mughal sovereignty as they had done for years;[128] and so the picture-making that copies them in its field of signs must equally have been intended to provide those same visual associations or history repeating in order and also to add an air of solemnity to the ceremony portrayed, much in the same way as the picture on the balcony wall of Akbar in the *Padshah-nama*: Akbar's posthumous portrait appears to preside over the ceremony involving his son and grandson Jahangir receiving Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan), and this creates the co-presence of three emperors.[129]This, in turn, bears a relation to another picture of Jahangir holding up a picture of Akbar, which he appears to do on a balcony.[130] In recording the ceremonies of kingship by painting them, these pictures reactivate mythologising in a visual sense. The visual continuity of compositions and the specific device of deploying pictures within pictures play a part in articulating the political and cosmic message of continuity and identity

with the archetypal past. And this essential function of myth is achieved pictorially: chronological recurrence is instantiated by artistic recurrence.

Painting itself becomes the sign and practice of a recurrent ritual and the imitative nature of the event is enforced by interpictorial references. The weighing of the emperors at the beginning of the solar calendar was a ceremony that was performed by Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Awrangzeb. No doubt these events were pictorialised several times, although only a few examples survive. In the Jahangir period, circa 1617 there is an illustrated leaf from the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* showing the young Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) weighed with jewel-encrusted scales. A similar composition appears of this ritual in the *Padshah-nama* circa 1635. This particular ceremony is a ritualistic performance and can be traced back to earlier Persian precedents of the celebration of *Nawruz*, the Iranian New Year. In the reign of Shah Ismail, Kvandamir writes in his history that after the birth of Sam Mirza, a head shaving ceremony was arranged and his hair was weighed against gold and this was then distributed as alms to the poor.[131]These were also the occasions for sumptuous court displays organised by merchants and craftsmen but in several commentaries it is emphasised that the ceremony is apotropaic, instrumental in warding off evil by performing an act of almsgiving. Another important archetype which both the ritual of weighing and its pictorialisation employ is a tradition regarding Yusuf (Joseph) who was sold in Egypt and in some illustrations of texts recounting the tales of the prophets is seen in an auction seated on or near some large scales to be weighed against gold and precious stones, eventually to be bought by Zulaykha. Here also, this example shows us the pivotal importance of paintings in preserving oral traditions, and perceptions of traditions, that form a corpus of myths. In the earlier of the two Mughal paintings of the weighing ceremony the prince sits on one of the scales, much as he is shown as a grown man doing the same thing, years later. Beneath him is an elaborate carpet with a border of flowers with butterflies (or moths) resting upon them. Directly underneath the prince is a design of three *peris* or fairies that appear to hold up the scale above them, or at least be dancing underneath it. Forming an interpictorial reference linked to the re-performance of ceremony, the fairies have been replaced by other magical creatures in the later version, namely, two phoenixes (*simurghs*) that appear to be flying around each under directly under the scale on which Shah Jahan sits.

The use of mythical animals and animal motifs by the Mughal rulers as part of their image of kingship is an important recurrent tradition in Mughal painting. Largely ignored by modern scholars is a picture of Nur Jahan entertaining Jahangir and Prince Khurram in the Victoria and Albert Museum.[132]Nur Jahan is pictured on the left facing Jahangir who is on the right. On his side is Prince Khurram, later to become Shah Jahan, depicted on a smaller scale. In the

background of this picture is a wall painting of a family of deer, a stag, doe and faun, which are to be associated with the family portrayed in the foreground. This was not the first or only time that the image of a doe and a stag was used in connection with Jahangir. In the picture of Jahangir playing *Holi* **Fig. 2.2**, a wall panel is painted with these animals near the emperor suggest him (and perhaps Nur Jahan) in an amorous and playful mood.[133] However, in the Victoria and Albert Museum picture of Nur Jahan entertaining Jahangir and Prince Khurram, a more formal arrangement is achieved and the pictorial rug provides a striking focus for the whole picture. The carpet they sit on is an elaborate chinoiserie design of two phoenixes and a dragon surrounded by flaming pearls.[134] The phoenixes and the dragon are symbols associated with royalty and with King Solomon in particular.[135] The visual effect and atmosphere intended by the artist was one of royal bearing, power and monumentality and the artist has achieved this mythologising by painting this dazzling pictorial carpet that seems to surround them in a ring of fire. The frontispieces of many royal manuscripts are decorated with two phoenixes in symmetry[136]and the emperor was shown in other paintings sitting under an awning embroidered with two gold phoenixes.[137] There is also a picture of a young prince, probably Akbar, although possibly also, Prince Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir (it is perhaps not surprising that they often seem to resemble each other), where he is portrayed with a falcon on his arm and dressed in an elaborately decorated fabric featuring a phoenix woven into the fabric of his sleeve. Several paintings associate figural textiles and the phoenix with the Emperor Jahangir.[138] The double phoenix was also used as a royal insignia on canopies and caparisons in Safavid Iran.[139]

Performative acts and rituals, whether inviting comparisons in an artistic competition or weighing the Emperor against silver and gold to be distributed to the poor, become events bringing the archetype from outside of time into the particular and into linear (historic) time. This is clearly analogous to the recital of the *Qur'an*, a re-enactment of sacred time. For Akbar, book reading itself was a re-performance. That it was possible for a book reading to be regarded as performance may be seen in Akbar's enthusiasm for the *Hamza-nama*, magical tales of the prophet's uncle:

> Experienced people bring them [books] daily and read them before his Majesty, who hears every book from the beginning to the end [The Emperor] was very fond of the story which contained 360 tales [the *Hamza-nama*], so much so that in the female apartments he used to recite them like a storyteller[140]

The *Hamza-nama* in particular, in its unusually large format was meant to be performative, re-activating myth. Storytelling and oral history, closely aligned to the painting of a story can be a way of bringing to mind the myth of the

original act it portrays. An underlying logic sustains interpictorial repetitions. Both the "reading" and making of pictures in illustrated books are a re-enactment, making present a sense of mythical or prior time (or imaginative time), allowing it to intervene or create a rift in ordinary time consciousness. Such mental transport, devised and triggered by works of art, is universal and varied in all cultures, Mughal included. It may be based on the phenomenology of reading itself. Losing oneself in the story is a literal and figurative event, a fusion of ordinary and mythical time, often described as a kind of visionary event, where a distracted consciousness creates the illusion of a temporal anomaly. This relationship is taken as a given in other, similar book painting traditions. Michael Camille reminds us that in medieval Europe texts were essentially performative, they were 'activated' by being spoken or read aloud.[141] Processes of pictorial and textual reading were subordinate to this phonocentric "present direct voice."[142] From this perspective, it is possible to see Mughal illustrations not as mute preservations of history but as dramatic, immediate and vital tools that support the immediacy and directness of speech, but also, of figures of speech. It is with this in mind that the modern viewer and reader can understand the pictures of Akbar's *Hamza-nama*, which were simultaneously viewed and the text read out, both re-enacted and experienced as the cause and effect of speech.[143]

Mughal Painting and the *Habitus*

While some formulaic recitations and its visual equivalents were clearly deliberate, especially in examples where the Mughal emperors are shown within recognisable mythical contexts as legendary figures and in recognisable spatial patterns, it is reasonable to assume that some visual signifiers must have functioned by way of a traditional cooperation of practice and thought, often called the *habitus*, so called by Pierre Bourdieu, the theorist of social attitudes and practices. The *habitus* does not oppose but cooperates with the concept of subliminal mental and artistic activity within conscious processes such as aesthetic appreciation, and thus Mughal painting in reconfiguring visual structures from pre-existent ones, could also have reproduced in the visual arts "more than it knows."[144] Bourdieu's *habitus* helps us to understand the resilience of certain social practices such as those that allowed for the repeated visual structures found in Mughal painting. The *habitus* can be defined as a cultural habitat, which becomes internalised in the form of dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways. These are durable, transposable dispositions that inform practice, skills, habits and assumptions, as well as a number of cognitive operations and customs that never usually pass through consciousness. However, an individual may become aware of these inherited dispositions

through conscious reflection or through contact with an alien environment. The *habitus* is acquired through acculturation into certain social groups such as social classes, gender, family, peer group, profession or nationality. According to Bourdieu, there are different *habituses* associated with each of these groups. Each individual's *habitus* is a complex mix of these different *habituses* together with certain individual peculiarities. Hence, the choices an artist or artists and supervisors make in the process of painting are largely dependent on this complex overlapping of inherited dispositions that inform judgments and practices. This goes some way to explaining the cohesion and consistency of Mughal visuality over and above the incidence of unique expression. The examples of interpictorial structures studied above, which carry with them various semantic attachments, appear to form a conscious or deliberate visual language shared by both viewer and artist. Yet in every kind of art, there are visual elements that appear to be the byproducts of a *habitus*, pre-conscious processes, which may be traced by their insistent presence in texts or paintings.

Many of these essential components are relationships of elements, deeply ingrained in cultural traditions and used by artists or authors instinctively. The following quote from Meletinsky warrants reproduction here in full as a key to understanding elements in Mughal paintings that are products of a *habitus*. It is a list that forms the core of intertextual stories and pictures in many cultures across the world:

> The fundamental building blocks of mythological systems of symbolic classification are not motifs but relationships in the sense of elementary semantic oppositions. The most important correspond to man's sensory and spatial orientations above/below, left/right, far/near, internal/external, big/small, hot/cold, dry/wet, silent/noisy, bright/dark, and various colors arranged into set of binary oppositions. These are later reified and supplemented by correlations of motifs in the cosmic space-time continuum (sky/earth, earth/underworld, earth/sea, north/south, east/west, day/night, winter/summer and sun/moon); correlations in the social dimension (self/other, male/female, old/young, higher/lower); contrasts at the margins of social solidarity, universal order, and of nature and culture (water/fire, domestic fire/fire of sun, raw/cooked, home/forest, village/desert) in numerical oppositions (even/odd, three/four) in basic antinomies (life/death, happiness/unhappiness); and finally, in the most important opposition, the opposition between the sacred and the profane.[145]

Correlations in the social dimension (self/other, male/female, old/young, higher/lower are the semantic opposites seen in all illustrations of the Sultan Sanjar episode and their permutations. The illustrations of Majnun in the desert follow the village/desert/ male/female (rational/irrational) semantic opposition but many of the other semantic oppositions mentioned operate in Mughal

painting also. Mircea Eliade, one of the foremost theorists of myth showed how these simple oppositions could be interspersed or repatterned in stories and paintings, thus avoiding essentialism and generalisation, for each local culture can reconfigure elements in unique ways, and, as I attempt, to show liminal areas between them. These points are important defences against the reductionism of binary opposites because they are interspersed in fluid and complex relations to each other, instead of being fixed or absolute. For example, one chain of elements could form the pattern: "moon-rain-fertility-woman-serpent-death-periodic-regeneration, but we may be dealing with one of the patterns within a pattern such as Serpent-Woman-Fertility,[146] or Serpent-Rain-Fertility"[147] Semantic patterns such as these are recurrent in Indian culture, right up to today in Indian cinema where snakes in common superstitious tradition can take on human form, and may even be related to Eve and the serpent myths. A significant point is that the artist constructs arrangements with pre-existent oppositions and configurations of elements as well as adding to them and changing them and uploading them into compositions that are more complex.[148] Little work has been done on how Mughal visual culture produced similar ways of making and remaking meaning. The Mughals shared important archetypes of the moon,[149] and sky[150] painting, water, sun,[151] fire and the mirror, which they juxtaposed in a series of recurrences in their painting and literature. Some of these representations are analysed below in detail. These elements were fashioned into narratives or myths of literary and visual kinds. Such identifications of underlying configurations of elements, also called "bundles"[152] of signification are possible also for Persian myths. Readers and viewers of works of art structured with these bundles create meaning from highly personal and individual contexts based on individual psychology and yet also, they share cultural and psychological meanings and interpretations with others. The body of traditions in literature and painting that contains these semantic elements or markers, structured into underlying patterns is also a product of accrued traditions, as well as the work of individual authors and artists who add their own insights to these traditions that span generations. There are both inadvertent as well as premeditated aspects to the configuration of archetypal elements underlying literary and visual stories, both in their creation and reception. In its most premeditated form a regime sets about to create an image of itself that is based on the powerful appeal of older cultural myths, or sets about, *ex nihilo*, trying to create works of art in literary and visual forms that contain semantic substructures. But even then, semantic patterns from previous usages reappear as part of the deep-rooted inheritance of the imagination, suggested in dreams or reading in-between the lines of stories.[153]

Although we cannot know how self-evident semantic patterns, oppositions or structures were in the Mughal visual arts, and whether they spoke to the

Mughals in subliminal or obvious ways, recurrent mythical elements may be revealed in comparative analyses of Mughal paintings. There is a need to look at Mughal painting in books not as freeze-frame shots of discrete events but as links in a recombinative semantic chain that run parallel with the linear sequencing and simple illustration of the immediate, accompanying text. Such an approach has already been demonstrated to some extent in the analysis of Mughal art.[154] I have looked at the recurrence of aspects of composition and its potential to yield polysemy in art. The following is an attempt to look at some more specific and often isolated elements in Mughal paintings and their *potential* for resonance in the imagination and collective memory of the Mughal viewer and reader on *either* conscious or intuitive levels.

Fire

One of the most frequently illustrated pictures in Persian painting is the story of Seyavash in Firdausi's *Shah-nama.* The pictorial tradition often shows a man in white on a horse, smothered by a "mountain of flames" as described in the text. There is a late sixteenth century version in a Mughal *Shah-nama* appearing in a very similar style to versions painted 200 years before this.[155] On the literal level, the young prince is tested by a fire ordeal to prove his innocence of a crime of passion with Sudabeh, King Afrasiyab's consort. The visual representation of this event has both a literal aspect ("this is Seyavash" and, "this is the fire" etc) yet other mythical elements are also evident, beyond the simple illustration of the story. The man in white is innocent. The camphor and white tunic he wears are associated with a shroud and the embalming of corpses thus suggesting his symbolic descent into death. His miraculous survival is actually a return; the fire cleanses and renews (as the fire turns the yellowness of disease into the redness of health in Zoroastrian lore). The semantic chain identified by Eliade is fire-sun-sacrifice-death-cleansing-renewal.[156] In one manuscript, the flames engulfing Seyavash are shown overflowing into the margin and burning the words of the page, suggesting the page, the book and the word as archetypes of creation and civilisation are being set alight by an apocalyptic flame.[157] This device is repeated in a painting in the *Akbar-nama* depicting the calamitous self-immolation of the Rajput women following the siege of Chittor in 1568, where the citadel is smothered with flames which tragically spill over into the viewer's space beyond the margin lines, the fire appears to eat into the page itself.[158] In the Mughal *Razm-nama* (The Book of Wars, the Persian translation of the Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata*), there is a picture of the cataclysmic fire that brings to an end a whole cosmic cycle showing Asavatthama creating flames to set alight all of the Pandavas.[159] Fire not only reveals the truth and speaks it in the air but it devours it. Fire is a

vehicle for the public statement of self-immolation and cleansing, and unlike the ignominy, drowning often appears as an elevated form of death or sacrifice. This distinction is born out to a greater or lesser degree by a majority of representations of water and fire in Islamic art.

Associated with the cataclysmic/cleansing fire are cosmic renewal, rebirth and heaven, and the fire that is associated with the soul of purity and the manifestation of the truth (the prophets are often portrayed thus, with halos of fire in Islamic manuscripts). Seyavash has passed through the severest test of fire, his rite of passage stepping over death with his courage. The horseman-fire-mountain recalls the *Qur'an*ic *Buraq*, Muhammad's steed on the occasion of his ascension, associated also with the lightening, sky and fire; these elements are possibly also related to Mongolian *shaman* myths of ascending to heaven on a sacrificed horse, which similarly integrates elements of the essential form of this myth. The Mughals recreated the visual form of the *mi'raj* tradition.[160] The language used to describe Seyavash consistently evokes images of the sacrifice of innocence, but there are also priest-king sacrificial undertones: not only is it implied that he has supernatural wisdom greater than the angel Soroush but he constantly laments his fate, known to all since birth, to have his innocent blood shed. Yet, conforming to cyclical myth, his son, "like a candle lit from the fire of the sun" will avenge his death.[161]

In the *Qisas al-Anbiya*, traditional stories of the prophets known to Muslims the world over, the Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) faith in monotheism is tested by Namrud (Nimrod) who catapults him into the centre of a great fire, whose roaring strength and size has been rendered into the poetic phrases which are reminiscent of those describing the fire set for Seyavash's ordeal. Ibrahim refuses all help from the angels and waits for god himself to cool the fire, which he does, allowing Ibrahim to walk through the flames, but not before they have been wound up with flowers, signifying the cleansing yet renewing properties of fire.[162] The fire tests of the faith of Islam against idolatry.[163]

In a Mughal collection of tales about prophets, the *Nafahat al-Uns*, 1604-5 a painting depicts the heretic (or Sufi shaykh) al-Hallaj's execution by showing him engulfed in fire.[164] In the Mughal *Hamza-nama*, (the tales of Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad), the burning fire is shown apocalyptically cleansing the world of evil and non-belief, as Hamza burns Zarduhust (Zoroaster's) chest of armour and breaks his urn with his ashes. The fire is doubly significant, as it destroys the symbol of Zoroastrianism, fire, with fire, leaving the world renewed in its Islamic faith.[165] Here, the fire extinguishes an aeon allowing another to come into existence in the form of Hamza, until the next fire is lit. The cupola of the temple covering the fire is adorned with solar symbols associating the fire with the sun and with the sacrifice that brings renewal (as the sun rises in the morning) and is also giver of life and destroyer

of life.[166]Associated with this, however, is the *farr-i izadi*, the divine effulgence,[167] which is shared by kings and passed down from generation to generation, a favorite reference of the Mughal emperors from Humayun to Shah Jahan and one based on the re-mythification of Sassanian light and dark imagery.[168] The power of divine effulgence and of the engulfing passion and devotion it can inspire in ordinary mortals is illustrated in the Mughal period *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi by the tale of the bathhouse keeper who set himself alight at the sight of the visible beauty of the king, who appears to look like a young Akbar.

There is no doubt that the *Yogi roasting the torso of a demon* in the manuscript *Raj Kunwar* (The King's Son) painted in 1603-4[169] recombines the mytheme of the fire. Fire is both a destructive and civilising force. The fire destroys the last remains of a demon and yet its civilising or purifying force is defiled by a non-Muslim. In the foreground, the fire consumes the torso of the half-human creature, which is turned on a spit, cooked as food for the Yogi. Two Muslim companions in the cave (another reference to the *Qur'an*) look on with a mixture of disgust and amazement, finding refuge from defilement in their cave of wisdom and refuge. This follows Eliade's semantic chain of primitive nature versus culture, raw/cooked, forest/home, desert/village but interlaced with this is the semantic chain linked to the cave, wisdom/life/refuge/moral cleanliness challenged by the Yogi who perverts the purifying and civilising power of the fire with his ignorance/unclean food /danger/defilement.

An interesting variation on these themes is the meeting of a civilised lady and a tribal Bhil **Fig. 3.3** portrayed in clothes made of leaves, she sits in front of his hut (painted to appear as a cave opening) with the 'civilising' fire that divides them. She also offers him something to drink from a cup and below there are books put to one side. An extension of this binary opposition raw/cooked as signified by the fire is spiritual blindness versus spiritual wisdom, further emphasised by the appearance of the cave in both of these pictures and in **Fig. 3.2**.[170] The image also references the king visiting the sage visual mytheme.

In the Mughal *Nafahat al-Uns* f. 135, the Sufi Abu'l Adyan praying on a bed of coals preserves the configuration of archetypes while extending their meaning. The Sufi's fire by ordeal demonstrates his faith in god's power over the elements and over the apocalyptic, cleansing fire. The saint's piety, as Ibrahim's allows for him to pass through the flames unscathed, his truth is made manifest. This scene has been painted not only because it may have appealed subliminally to the mythical imagination but also because of the powerful significations that a fire by ordeal arouse in the Mughal viewer, due to intertextual and interpictorial knowledge of Seyavash's or Ibrahim's fire ordeal,

discussed above, and all the other associations that further elaborate the lasting allure of fire. The Mughals also painted Sita undergoing fire by ordeal to prove her virtue[171] and there is also a painting of Mahajambunada surrounded by a ring of fire.[172] It may also be noted here that the Jesuit Father Monserrate records that the Jesuit debate with the mullahs at Akbar's court reached such an impasse on one occasion, and that a trial by fire was discussed as a way to resolve the conflict between the "disputing physicians." Although this was not allowed to happen, knowledge of mythic archetypes is indicated here, as well as the persistence of theological traditions and beliefs. What is being painted then, in a presumably simple illustration of Seyavash and the trial of fire, or for that matter any of the examples given here, is an archetype that may exist as a semantic chain: white, spirit, sun, fire, death, apocalyptic cleansing, rebirth, and civilisation. Fire reflects the power of myth because of what is possible to do with it: as an original solar flame it can be kept alive as a something sacred in generations and in the concept of the *farr-i izadi*; it has both a destructive and cleansing force, it destroys and yet brings civilisation (the cooked, the sacrificial offering) it signifies illumination in tales of the prophet Musa and the burning bush and is associated with ancient light imagery by the Mughals. Cooperative with the darkness of the cave which signifies esoteric wisdom, the fire represents an advanced form of revealed or exoteric knowledge which can light up the darkness but can also burn, hence the initiation ceremonies that surround it such as cooking, emphasising the domestic, civilising rituals surrounding fire.

Water

The apocalyptic power of the fire cooperates in apocalyptic visions of the Flood. Yet, its tamed nature can be found as fountains of water, perhaps the most ubiquitous feature in gardens in Persian and Mughal art and culture. In manageable quantities, water signifies divine providence, and life, purity, paradise and renewal; in its torrential state as an angry river or powerful sea, it can stand for the wrath of god and his cleansing of the earth. In both cases renewal are suggested. On the opposite side from a fire ordeal, there is the frequently occurring image in Mughal art of figures drowning or saved from drowning in the water. A passenger is rescued from drowning in a *Gulistan* of Sa'di c. 1609-10 as figures try to help lift him up on the sides of the boat.[173] Pir Mohammad drowns while crossing the Narbada River in the *Akbar-nama*;[174] Darab and his son watch one of the boats accompanying them being wrecked off the Arabian coast near Mount Uman in the *Darab-nama* (tales of Darab) also expresses what is obviously a particularly Mughal obsession with death by drowning, as does a painting from the *Tarikh-i Alfi* (History of the Millennium)

which associates the terrible events of the destruction of the tomb of Husayn at Karbala with summary executions, buildings on fire and a scene, bottom left, of people drowning or being saved from drowning below.[175]

A frequent design on figural textile hangings of the Mughal period depicts ships and boats and Portuguese figures seen also in the backgrounds of many of the illustrations in late Akbar-period manuscripts and in the *Khamsa* of Nizami in particular. But also evident here is a common motif on carpets of drowning men. It has been suggested that the episode of a drowning man and Portuguese sailors is the death of Bahadur Shah, Sultan of Gujarat, while visiting the Portuguese fleet.[176] La'l, the Mughal artist, painted this very subject in the British Library *Akbar-nama*.[177]Associated with this fascination with the power of water are several other myths. A monster attacking Hamza from the depths of the sea is a crystallisation (visually and in the story itself) of Hamza's deepest fears.[178] The painting helps us to understand that the mythical significance of the sea and water in the Mughal psyche is one akin to the *horror vacui*, of the bottomless and inscrutable depths of the sea, both primeval, apocalyptic and irrational, the antithesis of the solid, safe, knowable 'land' of civilisation. This fear continues to be a favoured artistic device to attract the viewer's attention in two paintings that are similar to each other and by the same artist, Miskina, *The Chinese princess thrown into the waters of the Tigris near Baghdad* (a possible survival of the Sumerian god Enki[179]) **Fig. 2.12**, and a picture of Noah's Ark in a *Diwan* of Hafiz[180] that also features a figure lifted up onto the boat miraculously saved from drowning. And we have already seen a painting of *Iskandar Lowered into the Sea* from around 1595, depicting him lowered into the sea in a diving bell, **Fig. 2.13**.[181] This is an interpictorial reference to both of these examples and ties together different threads of myth into a tight knot of complexity: water, the flood, punishment, death by drowning, supplemented with the diving bell, and yet another link with salvation and divine mercy, and thus, as if by a charm, the unruly water is robbed of its terrifying power.

Feats of heroism are put into relief upon a backdrop conquering collective fears of death, thus water becomes a testing of devotion and in the form of a deluge sweeps clean the bad faith of the world. In the *Hamza-nama*'s *Ilyas Preserves Prince Nur al-Dahr from the Sea*[182] the prophet is depicted walking on water, a re-emergence of the story in the Christian Gospels of Christ and the beginning of his ministry. The artist Miskina had most probably seen the *Hamza-nama* painting, both of his mentioned above situate a threatening crocodile-like dragon signifying danger seen in all three paintings, in exactly the same location, far bottom right, evidence of interpictorial references, with their semantic linkages also at work.[183] It is also significant that fish are *mukru*, unclean food, which is not forbidden but not recommended, and this moral uncertainty is also attached to the quality of deep and murky water. There is,

however, quite a tradition of mythology attached to fish.[184] In the same vein, a painting of an old Sufi shaykh shows him floating on the water on his prayer mat after he had been refused a place on the ferry, an illustration from a verse from the *Bustan* of Sa'di, 1605. This in itself is a literary and visual re-mythologising of the tale of a Sufi saint saved while other people are carried away by the stream in the *Haft Awrang* (Jami's Seven Thrones). One of the passengers in amazement at this feat is a Portuguese passenger.[185] The painting of the Sufi saint floating serenely on the surface of stormy seas references another, this time of the Emperor Babur crossing the Panjhir River, precariously positioned on a rug on a raft, bravely and heroically holding on while his companions are seen drowning in the torrents of the river. Babur is obviously shown here as one destined to overpower cataclysmic events and to succeed in founding the Mughal dynasty but also, the painting uses a familiar visible mythic structure to lend intertextual meaning to the Babur picture: he is supposed to be compared to pious men shown on their prayer mats (or walking on water), lifted by their faith on makeshift rafts floating over dangerous waters, reaching safety by virtue of their piousness.[186] All of these stories in both visual and literary forms flatter the main characters by showing that their piety is rewarded by a power over ungovernable waters lent to them by god.

Other stories relate a narrative about victory over the magical treachery of the sea. In illustrations of the story of Nuh (Noah) the figure in the sea is often identified with Khizr, often shown lowering Iskandar into the sea. Khizr is a prophet and a patron of seafarers, guardian of the Water of Life, and a later interpolation in the Alexander Romance.[187] Such a figure, seen in a bubble below the ship in the Nuh story, gives us a clue to the religious message of the myth: that god will find a safe passage for those faithful to him, through the Flood. Although the Nuh story is riddled with fear of drowning, a fear specifically voiced by Nuh himself to Jibrail, the reverse meaning of the Flood is about cleansing[188] and salvation. Like the fish that swallowed Jonah, the Ark:

> […] was instructed by God to take care of its passengers as a pregnant mother guards her unborn baby. This phrase is a common metaphor expressing the religious concept of death and rebirth attached mainly to the persons of Nuh, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Yunus and Ayub (Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Jonah and Job).[189]

Those beyond salvation, destined to drown are sinners, or indeed, idolaters. In a another painting from the *Ai'n-i Iskandari* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, Iskandar orders his men to drown the Greeks for not believing in his prophecy, and they are painted struggling against the deluge, tragically trying to hold on to planks of wood and grasping at other objects beyond their reach.[190] This visual familiarity under which lies a process of appreciating myth in its full dramatic force is extended in Mughal art to refer to the Europeans in the supposedly

purely historical *Padshah-nama* painting of the capture of Port Hoogly (Bengal) by the Mughals in 1632.[191] Although the painting endeavors to depict an historic scene, it is obvious that it is also interpictorial, paying much attention to death by drowning at the center of picture, calculated to transfix any Mughal viewer.[192] There is also, again, the preferred habit of Mughal historians and commentators to make significant historical events appear to have a mythical archetype which gives authority and richness to the event, much as the painter of the battle scene has achieved by focusing on the actual and archetypal fear of drowning. The Portuguese deserve to drown because they are idolaters, and this is prefigured in the story of Nuh (Noah), when Iblis had tempted the human race to turn idolatry, presaging the Flood, sent to cleanse the earth of infidels. The Mughal writer Khafi Khan makes the link between Port Hoogly and idolatry clear:

> According to their depraved belief, they have formed statues of Hazrat Isa (Jesus) and of Maryam [Mary][193]

A mythical re-enactment denuding the idols of their power and sanctioned by sacred precedent was the event that occurred after the sea battle. Appropriately for the deluge myth and for the act of cleansing, Shah Jahan had these very statues thrown into the Jumna River where they, presumably, sank to the bottom without a trace.

The Book

Word, writing, pen, book, illustrated book form a formidable lexical set in Islamic cultures. The appearance of an image of a book reproduced in painting must have evoked many thoughts in the mind of the Mughal viewer. In **Fig 3.3** *Civilised lady and a tribal Bhil* the books lying beside the 'civilised lady' undoubtedly signify learning and wisdom contrasted with the natural state of knowledge of the tribal Bhil. In *Jahangir on the Hourglass Throne*, regardless of what kind of book the emperor gives his shaykh in this picture, the point is to bind the visual myth of Jahangir as origin of imperial authority and benefactor of wisdom and learning centred on the act of presenting the book. Years earlier Akbar was presented with a multi-volume copy of Plantin's polyglot bible by the Jesuits and as a sign of respect placed a volume on his head. When a book is painted as an image in a picture, a rather convoluted cognitive process occurs: the painting represents ("contains") the image of a book, and yet the painting itself is usually contained in a book. Besides this phenomenologically accessible spatial paradox, the image of the book in a painting can refer to the *Qur'an*, or the archetype of the book, or the album[194] and also, it reflects the medium of

production itself, that the painting is in a *particular*, individual, illustrated book (as opposed to the Idea/archetype of the book), which carries the image, which the viewer holds.

This process of "dual thinking" is for Northrop Frye "a point of epiphany" which comes to the reader or viewer who has an integrated experience of form or convention, so that it has become a way of looking at the real world. For Frye the book is the place where the reader discovers herself and the world around her but it is also the key to the whole library of books, the key to intertextuality and of life experiences. It is also the place where individual experience is an activation of timeless myth and the meeting of universal and particular. Reading becomes a metaphor for self-revelation but also books "read" people. For Frye, one has to become dead to literal meaning to be re-born in the figurative meaning of the text, with subterranean levels of forms and types embedded in it but this should also sensitise us to reading images. Underneath a manifest sequence of events is a latent sequence of forms and types. Some of this is phenomenology should be kept in mind when experiencing Mughal illustrated books and illustrations of books.

The illustrated book is a carrier of myths and so is the book that is illustrated in the painting. When Abu'l Fazl is painted in one of the illustrations of the *Akbar-nama* offering his work, the *Akbar-nama* to Akbar, we a have good example of how complex and reflexive interpretations of the image of the book can be. Roland Barthes calls this cognitive operation, found so often in literature from Cervantes to Borges, *autonymy*, a reflexive loop. The reflexive thought that the image of the book can refer to the book in which it is placed, may be seen clearly also in the colophon of the Mughal *Khamsa*, where the artist Dawlat is shown painting a portrait of the calligrapher of the text of the *Khamsa* Fig. **2.10**. The copier of the book is seen writing a page in a painting that is enclosed in a book he has copied. In another page of the *Khamsa*, the artist Nanha signed his name in tiny letters on his painting of Iskandar and the seven sages. He signed it in a depiction in a book one of the sages appears to be holding. He thus signed his name in the "book" (the fictive one) and in the actual book, the emperor's copy, *and* 'in' the painting. The double portrait composition of the colophon **Fig. 2.10** is another intelligible form of recurrence. There are various other paintings where the calligrapher and artist are represented in an illustration of the book they have worked on and this may ultimately derive from the author-portraits seen in the manuscripts of antiquity.[195]

The book is the image of the word,[196] yet the word itself conjures up the image. This idea is expressed by Abu'l Fazl whose words which describe the power of words cleverly evoke the mental envisioning of painting:

> A letter (i.e. the visible symbol or form) is the portrait painter of wisdom; a rough sketch from the world of ideas […] speaking, though dumb; stationary, and yet traveling; stretched on the sheet and yet soaring upwards.[197]

Such a statement by Abu'l Fazl and the painting by Dawlat are instruments for the mythic renewal of the Word. The ritual act of uttering or writing the name of god, an act that is not merely representation, fuses cosmic, mythical and practical acts together into one event.[198]The archetype of the book is the *Qur'an*, the word of god revealed on earth through the "image" of writing, which, when read or spoken is transformed into thought leaving behind its material substance (or representation): This is suggested by Abu'l Fazl in the *Ain-i Akbar*: "[Writing has] the burden of its concrete component and returns, as a single ray, to its old place the realm of thought"[199]and is thus rendered back anagogically into the air "stretched on the sheet and yet soaring upwards." One need only look at the cosmic symbolism of Islamic pen cases replete with thrones, solar and lunar imagery and calligraphy to see the configuration of mythemes come together in one object.

The picture shown on the wall in the disputing physicians **Fig.1.4** shows the Logos-*Kalima*[200] the *vision* of the saint is the enunciation of the angel's *speech*, which he transcribes into the scroll/book, yet the whole transformation is made into an image by the Mughal artist, who also manages to add a theological debate about the truth in the foreground of his painting. The image of the painting on the wall is endowed with the power of communication as it potentially conveys the Logos to the depicted audience, the figures in the foreground and eventually to us the viewers. The painting is thus a succession of instantiations of the Logos-*Kalima* but through various textual and visual transformations; the painting thus actively plays a part in producing theological meaning in a hierarchy of revealed truths. A similar hierarchy of meaning in the signifying chain is characterised by Western theorists such as Derrida as Idea-speech-writing, based on his reading of the Word of god received by Jeremiah and related to Baruch the scribe to record.[201] The pattern here is Word/interlocutor/inscription/medium and in the disputing physicians context, as we have discussed earlier in the context of recognising dialogue, it is Word/interlocutor/medium (or writing/image) and the dialectics of representation/truth. A similar semantic chain is used many years later in 1640 with Bishan Das's Zafar Khan and his brother in the company of poets and scholars **Fig. 3.1**, where the angels painted above the heads of the company mingle with the enunciation of profound words and the books that the scholars hold, right down to the artist who paints himself painting the debate in the foreground, bottom left.

The book is turned into a kind of royal regalia in Payag's posthumous portrait of the first Mughal emperor Babur c. 1640 where the margin drawings appear to suggest the emperor received the *Qur'an* from heaven, with numerous scholars around him also carrying books.[202] This may be said also of the British Library painting of the *Emperor Timur and His Descendents*, where the poet Sa'di offers a book to Timur.[203]This complex imagery inserts the Mughal dynasty into the semantic chain: word, image, revealed book so that the emperors become agents in an essential process of transferring knowledge and are thus shown as scholar-kings or interpreters of the sacred laws.[204] The painting of *Jahangir on the Hourglass Throne* suggests the pattern is Word/Book/Jahangir/Shaykh-Sufism/Ottoman Sultan-religious orthodoxy/King of England-Christianity/Hindu/Image/Idolatry. The book in this painting is the pivotal element on top of a hierarchy of religions, placing the 'people of the book' (monotheistic religions) above image worshippers.

The Mirror

Another resonant image employed in both literary texts and in paintings is that of the mirror, not only because it presents the idea of duplication but also, inversion. The story of Solomon and the visit by the Queen of Sheba (Bilquis) in the *Qu'ran* (XXVII: 44) establishes an early paradigm. Solomon orders that a floor of crystal be laid in the entrance hall for the reception of the Queen of Sheba. About to step foot on this dazzling surface, the queen impulsively lifts her skirt to walk across it, believing it to be water.

> The mistake made by Bilquis expresses, at the hidden level of the text, her ignorance of the religious truth and, in a wider perspective, the lack of knowledge that characterises all pagan people. In short, the content of the verse, the optical illusion forms a metaphor for paganism and is consequently invested with a negative artistic value.[205]

The aspect of paganism and superstition is also underlined by the fact that Solomon's advisors suspect Bilquis of having had a supernatural birth (born of genies) and therefore of having a mule's legs. The trickery of the glass floor not only reveals the truth (that the queen is indeed only human) but exposes the antiquated mode of thought represented by stories of genies and half-humans, now superseded by a rational Islam, free of such superstition and disbelief.

She is deceived, as they are, but the mirrored floor, although a deceit, reveals the truth. The story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba may be seen in a wider context of Islamic proverbial stories dealing with the theme of beguiling reflections and false appearances. These false appearances are often represented as the illusions of reality in the form of mirror reflections or portraits and other

paintings. An integral part of the nexus of meanings is that the mirror reflection is a superlative form of illusion. In the princess who paints a self-portrait **Fig. 2.6** in the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, we see the princess in the process of painting her reflection in a mirror. In the verses accompanying the illustration, the poet advises Bahram Gur that the portrait should not be confused with the princess; it is only a reflection of her, as illusory as the mirror's reflection of the princess. We see the portrait she is painting, as a reflection of her, or as a reflection of the painting of her (painting herself). The implication is one of a reflection of a reflection.

3.7 *Vilawal Ragini*

The painting of this scene is part of a durable multi-cultural *visual* myth, which the Mughal artist has re-performed and re-instantiated. The painting illustrates the subject of the illusory power of the princess's painting and at the same time implicates itself in the illusionist ruse. This Mughal painting re-presents the mythic form of woman and her self-image as reflected in the well-established visual traditions of Ragamala paintings of the Indian subcontinent **Fig. 3.7**[206] and *vanitas* paintings in Europe.[207] There is also a Mughal painting of a woman gazing at her reflection in a round mirror from the Salim Album.[208] The text around this image suggests that the mirror was given to the woman as a gift

from god (the mirror itself is perhaps used as a metaphor for the ability for self-examination, or recognition, a distinction which sets apart humans from other animals) and that "the self-admiring soul" is oblivious to anything but her own visible beauty. The writing also serves the purpose of alerting the viewer that he or she must not get as absorbed in the image as the woman portrayed in her own reflection. The image of the reflection in all these paintings points to the illusory image of the painting that "contains" the mirror image; the painting of the mirror reflects back on illusoriness of the painting and is an illusion of an illusion. Included in this tradition of the portrait are Persian paintings, as early as 1410-11, of Shirin inspecting a portrait of Khusrau.[209] The legend of self-love is the hidden meaning of the princess who paints a self-portrait **Fig. 2.6**. The portrait is magical because it reflects self-awareness but also an unawareness of other. Bahram Gur, the hero of the tale part of which this painting illustrates, triumphs because he rescues her from her Narcissicism, and breaks the power of the visual illusion for her, for himself and for us the viewers and readers of images and rhetorical devices.

The puns employed by the poet Nizami in the verses to which the image of the princess painting a self-portrait alludes, reinforce the metaphysical implications this painting spotlights. The word '*jauhar*', mentioned several times in the text describing the story, means both 'essence', 'jewel', and 'lustre' (as in the shining surface of a mirror or the burnished surface of a book painting). '*Surat'*, also used repeatedly, can mean 'portrait', as well as 'effigy'; 'visage'; or 'appearance' (as opposed to 'true identity'). All are illusions: the painting, the mirror's reflection and the princess's face in the sense of all kinds of representation (poetic description, mental image, portrait, mirror reflection and book illustration). Even in Jahangir's reign, the same literary and metaphysical wordplay using metaphors of the mirror and the painting persisted. In a remarkable life size portrait of the emperor, datable c. 1617, an inscription around it reads:

> When he sees his lustrous likeness, it is as if the excellent king is looking at a mirror [...] whoever sees his image becomes an image worshipper
> Whether a dervish who cultivates virtues, or a king[210]

The portrait is so magical in its likeness of the emperor and in its ability to portray his virtues ("the mirror of the virtues of Akbar Padshah", his father) that the viewer becomes enchanted, as a lover of idols is enchanted by the image of divinity. "The kings of Rum (Turkey or Greece) and Chin (China) wait at the gate. In his likeness the painter has created much magic."[211]This verse is based intertextually on another comparison between mirrors and paintings made in the *Iskandar-nama* where there is the story of the competition held between the painters of Chin and Rum. The Greeks paint a life-like picture on one wall while

the Chinese polish the other side of the room so that it reflects the painting.[212] As in the painting of the princess and the a self-portrait **Fig. 2.6**, this picture entails a complex process of abstraction in three stages: if the terrestrial world in mystical terms is an illusion, so is the image of it painted by the artists of Rum, and yet there is another illusion created when this is then reflected in the opposite wall polished to a high gloss, created by the artists of Chin.

A mirror image features centrally in a painting of Iskandar ordering the invention of the mirror. Iskandar is shown having ordered the mirror to be cast in iron and there are workers busy hammering the hot metals into shape. He looks at his mirror image, shown to the viewer clearly outlined, while his advisors look on to the right.[213] Iskandar's quest for truth is likened to burnishing and polishing the surface of a mirror to obtain a clear reflection of an image. The illustration appears at a point in the narrative when, after founding the new city, Iskandariyya and inspired by the imperative to 'know thyself', Iskandar begins his spiritual quest. According to the Nizami text, the correct metals for the mirror had to be chosen, made into the correct shape and then laboriously polished to arrive at the suitable reflective surface. This suggests a struggle of refinement from crude, raw material substance into a form, reflecting form:

> If you look into the mirror of philosophy
> You will acquire the wisdom of Iskandar.
> When the round form of the iron-hard surface
> Was transformed from its dull and lifeless disposition
> Into a shining, reflective surface full of life,
> Before the crowd of nobles viewed their face,
> Iskandar looked into it.
> The jewel-like beauty of his reflected face,
> Met the jewel-like beauty of the burnished mirror.[214]

Burnishing and polishing are integral to the meaning of the mirror. Not only are these processes related to the art of painting miniatures (which are also burnished and polished for a jewel like surface, and they too have an illusory quality like reflective surfaces) but the Sufi adept is supposed to polish the image of his heart so he can see himself (or god) in its reflection.[215] In the tale of Iskandar having metal polished in order to "invent" the mirror, the dull metal "comes to life" with the burnishing, as Iskandar "comes to life" when he sees his own reflection by way of acquiring self-awareness. Looking into a mirror is a discovery of the truth, and the mirror is also hexagonal, implying that it is possible to see in all directions, including up and down, implying a powerful all-seeing mirror. The face and the mirror are both "jewel-like"; both refined, but also they possess an "essence", both meanings are rendered by the same word

jauhar-ayina.[216] Again, the image in the mirror is considered to be an illusion of an illusion, truthfully reflecting the illusion of corporeal existence in the shape of Iskandar's *surat* (remember that this can mean either face or portrait) and the implication is that this is the knowledge or self-awareness that Iskandar obtains. The knowledge he gains by looking into the mirror is of his own mortality, as the image he sees in the mirror is an illusion, in the same way that his appearance, his corporeal existence is an illusion in the life of the soul.

The breast or the body itself is only a mirror of existence (essence) whereas true life is found in matters of the heart. The mirror also is essentially an instrument that enables humanity to reflect on itself:

> Although you are reflected on every side (i.e. three-dimensional) yet you are
> none of those reflections. You are your own lover and a worshipper of form[217]
>
> Since the mirror shows your picture correctly, [and your flaws]
> Break yourself; it is an error to break the mirror.[218]

In Jami's *Yusuf u Zulaykha*, Yusuf sees pictures of himself and Zulaykha together embracing, which are hung in the room. These make Yusuf realise what he is doing and so he abandons his amorous pursuits. In Jami's *Yusuf u Zulaykha*, Zulaykha is said to have veiled her idol behind a curtain (a curtain or veil is also an important recurring mytheme). In the tale of Yusuf and Zulaykha, the curtain is used to keep the idol from Yusuf's view and in her error (and low estimation of the idol's powers); she believes that by screening off the idol she makes it unaware of her attempts to seduce Yusuf. Whereas, the pictures on the wall portraying Yusuf and Zulaykha reveal the truth of Yusuf's actions, as mirrors would also do, the veiled idol symbolises Zulaykha's hidden intentions, behind false appearances. It is part of the treatment of the power of images and reflections in these stories to also imply visualisations of them into book illustrations

In another story, this time in the *Haft Awrang* ('Seven Thrones) Jami begins a discourse on the nature of visual beauty and desire, and tells a story of an "ugly" East African who finds and cleans a mirror to see his reflection, and curses it thinking that the mirror is faulty.[219] In a rather complex knot of meanings, the mirror serves to show him his own self-loathing, and in a similar way people who behold their own 'beauty' are looking at their own desire, as they would in a mirror and this can be extended in Sufi thought to the "world", which is "[…] a wall we hang our mirror on."[220] The "entrapment" of the mirror image through deceit (in the same way that images generally deceive) is clearly signaled by Jami's stories. Ultimately, the mirror is a poetic and visual device used to broach the subject of discerning truth from image, a subject that is analogous to recognising Islam and one's true self, beyond appearances. In a

pictorial rather than just poetic sense, the mirror becomes a more complex motif, as it offers itself up as a visual spectacle only in order to deny itself as reality. This contradiction is typical of the *Haft Awrang* where the tension that exists between the world of external appearances and the denial of this by the affirmation of spiritual truth, becomes intricately connected with the paradox, intuited also by the viewer, of the affirmation and denial of the representational properties of the painting in which the image of the mirror is embedded.

In the Mughal period the opposition between external appearances and inner truths recurs in the princess who paints a self-portrait **Fig. 2.6** and the various paintings that survive of Iskandar ordering the creation of the mirror and the mirror on the look-out tower.[221] All are connected with the symbolism of the mirror, which must have been able to exercise over the viewer of these paintings the mysterious power of an unresolved conundrum: as a symbol of illusionism, the mirror in the painting reflects the illusory quality of painting. And painting, in turn, mimics the illusory quality of the mirror's reflection. Painting a mirror in an illustration challenges the viewer to go through a complex cognitive exercise in considering the illusion of an illusion and layers of representation. It is with this in mind that we can fully make sense out of a passage from Jahangir's memoirs about his observation of a reflection in a pool which showed the brilliant green of the hills behind and a flower he had planted that had an iridescent stem, like a peacock's tail, all appearing to vibrate in the ripples of the water.[222] Surely such a description is not merely a detailed and meaningless scientific observation but one that betrays the emperor's contemplation of the shimmering quality of images, reflections, reality and illusion.

Heads

Art historians such as David Freedberg might say that the underlying motivation for the painting of Jahangir shooting the severed and spiked head of one of his enemies (Malik Amber) is the ritual of magic.[223] This would seem to explain the highly superfluous act in itself (damaging part of a corpse in order to 'harm' it) and partly explains the painting of such an act. Leaving aside the issue of whether the act portrayed actually occurred or not, and going beyond reasonable explanations that such a picture might aggrandise the emperor and discourage potential rebels, the illogical core of such a depicted act still remains. This is the notion that by shooting an arrow into a corpse one is humiliating in some way the defeated enemy, shaming or utterly repressing his reputation, reversing the power of an antagonistic force by mechanism of wish fulfillment or through a cathartic assuaging of excess rage. Here the element of image magic lies in the belief in the efficacy of depiction in exorcising the undesirable. This efficacy is premised on the subliminal residue that dreams may come true

and can foretell calamity, and painting is therefore a ritual act containing elements of wish fulfillment that affect the course of events. The act of depiction confirms these events by the elision of the signified and the signifier.

The fact that the severed head is central to this ritual is an echo of the Timurid tradition of the utter destruction of the enemy of which decapitation is central. The legendary towers of heads in the time of Timur the conqueror springs to mind. He was known to have punished a city for rebellion by cementing the heads of those killed into tall towers, which could be seen from great distances serving to warn others never to disobey his authority. This had obviously passed into Mughal consciousness. There is a Mughal painting of the Akbar period depicting this tower of severed heads in the *Zafar-nama* manuscript in the Khuda Baksh Library, Patna.[224] But the severed head in many societies functions as a sign that transfixes death in the minds of the living. It signifies death, because it is "dead", it stands for the act of the severance of the dead from the living in its detachment from the body. But the severed head is also paradoxical (and herein lies its power to transfix death) because despite being severed from the body, it is still able to strongly suggest presence and identity and through a kind of illusionism and projection the observer imagines a residue of awareness (or more appallingly, self-awareness, or awareness of lack of self in the severed head)! Something of the magical horror of decapitation can be seen as late as the *Padshah-nama* manuscript with a painting portraying the death of Khan Jahan Lodi[225] **Fig. 2.9**. One of the Mughal officers presiding over the decapitation of traitors has a bronze cap featuring a head on each knee. This surely has been painted not as a response to intense observation of a real event, with the extremely unlikely coincidence of the meeting of decapitated heads with the ornamental knee guards adorned with heads on them. This is artistic license that points to the apotropaic value of the heads for the officer, they are obviously worn to protect him but are we to understand also with their close juxtaposition with the severed heads of traitors, that they are a foil against the fate destined for traitors? In another painting from the same manuscript, the heads of two traitors are brought to a Mughal general and they are referred to as "beehives of sedition and corruption."[226]

The severed head is made into an object, it is made portable, an accoutrement of architecture or dress, dehumanised yet still human, signifying a presence which is yet absent, the equivalent of a name crossed out,[227] small wonder that the severed head is utilised as a powerful magic symbol elsewhere in Mughal art. One of the most prominent examples of such work may be seen, again, in the disputing physicians **Fig. 1.4**. Behind the two opposing groups the representation of St. Matthew, experiencing a vision and receiving guidance from an angel. The European pictures appear to be virtually framed by severed heads on the top and on the pillars on either side of the mural that are also

adorned with this feature. The row of heads is in fact, a consistent framing device found in many Mughal illustrations that contain European or Hindu imagery, and is usually represented as an architectural detail above an entrance. A painting of a Hindu holy man clearly shows this feature, which is consistently used in the depiction of Christian scenes and Hindu scenes.[228] On its own, this detail may have signified little, or passed over as an ornamental device, but seen in these contexts, it is evident that such a frame of severed heads was used consistently, probably by the Mughal court's more superstitious artists as a magic charm or talisman to signal the power that these foreign images incorporated into Mughal illustrations might have on the artist or the viewer.[229]The severed heads emphasise the frame that creates a self-contained area.

> 'Self-contained' means isolated from and even protected against two potential intrusions: (1) that of the picture's own environment, and (2) that of the spectator's intrusive presence…frame or boundary are meant to protect that which is 'within'; the surface or plane that which is 'behind'. Both are seen as containing what is 'not of this world' but of a separate or higher reality.[230]

In the painting of the disputing physicians **Fig.1.4** we have a vision "not of this world"; it thus presents us with two depicted realities, separated by the frame of severed heads, decapitation here is the sign of a drastic conceptual *coupure*. It is possible to see the picture of a painting within a painting as a representation of one of the physician's visionary experiences. The saint has a vision of the angel in the European painting on the wall, the artist might also have intended this painting to appear as vision experienced by one of the disputing physicians which he has externalised (much like in modern animation, where a character's thoughts are externalised in a bubble or dialogue box). The relationship between the foreground and background in this painting is perhaps deliberately ambiguous, yet it is highly effective in attracting the interest of the viewer who continually feels the need to define this relationship. The plurality of meanings that can be formed from comparing background image with foreground is undoubtedly a measure of the success of the image as a whole in capturing the viewer's imagination, the heads alert us to a scission of the natural and the supernatural. The curtain thrown back as if to reveal a secret adds to the sense of deliberation behind, in, and around this enclosed image. In parallel with a common compositional scheme in Counter-Reformation Europe, the disputing physicians is a Mughal example of an artistic device that consists of the representation of a visionary experience by placing the visionary in the lower part of the picture with the vision in the upper part.[231] Some textual evidence further strengthens the argument that we are dealing here with a kind of

symbolism. As we have seen earlier, in the painting of the princess who paints a self-portrait **Fig. 2.6** the princess lures men to her castle and then beheads them with the help of magic talismans. In the story, a portrait of the princess captivates the hero, Bahram Gur:

> Around that portrait lay from head to toe, a hundred heads. He [Bahrām Gūr] said, "This pearl that's round a shark's neck hung: how shall I flee it? I'm undone.[232]

The heads are those of the princess's failed suitors who were foolish enough to attempt to overpower the talismans, which she had set up on the castle wall to protect herself, these are indicated by a pictorial frieze on the castle wall in **Fig. 2.6**, which also acts as a frame. The verse clearly indicates the seductive and captivating power and danger of the picture enclosed in the frame of severed heads, especially as the beholding of severed heads in itself has a grotesque and captivating power. The row of heads is thus intended primarily to signify a threshold, either to guard secrets and bar the way of the traveler or enquirer or, in the case of the disputing physicians simply to mark physically and conceptually discrete domains:

> Thresholds, whether spatial or temporal (such as rites of passage), are liminal zones, 'betwixt and between', or transitions where danger lies. As people pass from one state (physical, psychological, social) to another so they encounter danger which must be controlled through rituals that protect against pollution.[233]

Spatial organisation of this kind reflects mental divisions and compartmentalisation:

> Primary mythical and religious feelings are linked to the spatial threshold, which finds expression in the sacred control of the moments of 'entrance' and 'exit' in rites of passage and their corresponding myths.[234]

Yet also, the frame "is a threshold, but also of meaning."[235] As a device that alerts us to a self-contained area, the heads are responsible for the signification of different levels of meaning for the initiated, brave enough to venture beyond the threshold of the literal and the presumption that 'ornament' is usually non-signifying. The internal division also displays a preference for a mode of presentation. Yet, such a matter of taste or aesthetics which are tied in with creating discrete areas and delimiting areas of activity, may still have its basis in a subliminal or self-aware belief in picture magic.

For the Mughal artist, the line of heads manifests a conceptual break learnt from the predispositions of the *habitus*: it severs the dialogue between religions

and the contiguity of truth and image. It provides an appropriate and tasteful demarcation, propriety and superstition being the main motives, not, as might be assumed, simple mimesis or meaningless embellishment.

Conclusions

Myth recurs but it also visually recurs. It has not been my aim to detect all possible visual examples evident in Mughal painting but to lay the foundation for future studies. Scholars of Mughal art have known that Mughal paintings repeat or modify earlier pictorial compositions, or re-use them as types, and this presumes that a generalisation of reality is intended, not a literal reproduction of reality or realism in a European illusionist sense.[236] These repetitions reinforce mythic thought. Few have ever tried to understand how these patterns of repetition were perceived. The repetition of compositions and themes identified in the early part of this chapter extends the work done by others on the visual repetitions in Persian art and Indian art.[237] These can allow us to view paintings from the perspective of more complex processes of cultural identity and renewal. Certain repetitive visual configurations survive in Mughal painting from earlier Persian models because they preserve values, narratives and beliefs that have been called "mythic structures" in anthropology and literary studies. The aesthetic norm of repetition of compositions and subjects allowed for the preservation *and* renewal of meanings associated with them.[238]

Painting was pivotal in linking the past to the present. Re-using long established and ingrained visual conventions, gestures, poses and figural relationships in painting can be seen as a visual form of cyclical historiography and religious, aesthetic and philosophical recurrence, all of which are expressed ubiquitously in Mughal texts. Some art historians have conceptualised the survival and continued use of archetypal paradigms in the visual arts as a function of a culture's collective memory.[239] This is preserved by the retelling of mythical stories as studied in cultural anthropology and by intertextual networks researched in literary studies. In Mughal art, the collective memory is serviced by the recurrent spatial compositions and recurrent motifs in painting which carry with them deeper semantic associations inherited from earlier cultures and from the functioning of the *habitus*. The cyclical nature of compositional choices is thus not a meaningless aping of older conventions but a way of associating paradigmatic and foundational myths with Mughal events. Indeed, this gives reality a 'lineage'. Much like vocalising stories and recitals, paintings re-establish the past in the present through the recurrence of its conventions: "reading aloud was intended to be the means of investing memory with an ongoing value […] reproduction of an image is essential to its ability to act as a touchstone of recollection."[240]

Representations of the cave, fire, water, mirror, the book and heads, could not have been seen entirely as incidental props for an illustration of a story. The rich background of intellectual associations, which I have tried to sketch here, could not have been entirely erased from the mind of the viewer inspecting these images. Their recurrence, the fact that illustrations were continually chosen which contain them and which are often not even mentioned in the text, indicates their power as visual archetypes passed on from generation to generation, exercising a dynamically changing fascination for the viewer that was barely articulated. It is important to note the potential range of meanings available to the Mughal viewer when confronted with such resonant visual elements, even if only a small number of these meanings were formulated. It is also important to supplement the notion of intelligible content in Mughal painting with content that was a result of fundamental yet intuitively perceived assumptions. This is because it balances the view taken in Mughal art history that the Mughal emperors were all-powerful manipulators of propagandistic images for their own purposes and that this is the only way to interpret these images. There is more to Mughal painting than its intended message. While intentionality and supreme control are undoubtedly part of the Mughal pictorial process, recurring visual archetypes, theologemes, often recombined, found a way to live side by side with political messages, and indeed, the mimetic reproduction of Mughal visible world. Like all art, Mughal painting shows aspects of individual control and practice which lie on the surface of a number of impulsive and intuitive elements, much like language and its uses. Similarly, it would be anachronistic to ignore both superstitious belief and belief in mythical structures in the history of Mughal art in an attempt to turn it into a supremely rational, deliberate and programmatic art.[241] Painting worked in familiar ways to allow the Mughals to recognize, enjoy and elaborate their traditional perceptions and beliefs and even to visualize them eidetically. As it does today, painting facilitated a synchronous viewing of both the literal image and the aesthetic and traditional semantic networks seen through the image.

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[1] The belief that the Persian tradition of book illustration does not deserve complex literary or art historical investigation is exemplified by Basil W. Robinson writing about Persian painting, that it "may become dehumanised by attempts to exalt these direct and uncomplicated book illustrations to some rarefied metaphysical plane." B. W. Robinson, *Fifteenth Century Persian Painting: Problems and Issues* (New York, 1991), 79. Needless to say, even uncomplicated fairytales convey rich semantic associations without spoiling the story.

[2] See "Persian manuscripts are essentially ornamental devices upon which the readers could linger with pleasure and project sentiments aroused by the text." John Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 115.

[3]This simplification persists, despite recent attempts to show that Jahangir period artists understood how to use rather more complex literary forms such as allegory in their

paintings. See Gauvin Bailey, *Art of the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773*, 126-127. Bailey was right to see allegory as a visual form in Mughal art, however, he restricts his analysis of this to a few well-known Jahangir period paintings, whereas it is far more widely seen and subtly utilised in Mughal art in various periods. In addition to this, it is doubtful that the Jesuits were solely responsible for introducing the sense of allegory to the Mughal mind as Bailey suggests. Various Mughal and Persian allegorical forms in painting may be identified, which pre-date contact with European art.

[4] Indeed, Cassirer was at pains to point out that what insulates humans from nature is a "symbolic universe", not just a Kantian one of basic cognitive categories and concepts. For Northrop Frye mediation between humans and nature is governed by a "mythological universe", which in some sense presages the autonomy of artistic endeavours (both in their production and reception) in endless mythological reproduction. Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth*, 67. This would mean that an analysis of Islamic, Persian and Mughal myths and their structure is needed to see how they are embedded and mediated in Mughal miniatures, bearing in mind that this is not a simple case of storytelling, but a key to how the Mughal mind perceived the external world of nature bound up with and somehow representing fundamental mythic themes.

[5] Roxburgh has suggested the performative aspects of albums "which not only contained the products of creative performance, memorialising those performances and their makers, but brought calligraphies, paintings and drawings together for scrutiny and discussion in the social context in which many of them had originally been produced." Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 108.

[6] Adamova explains the use of pictorial conventions as a parallel to literary forms "That certain compositions were repeated in successive manuscripts has often been noted in the literature; yet only recently has it become clear that such repetition is a phenomenon that functions in a manner analogous to that in classical Persian literature; by analogy with literary terminology, the phenomenon is sometimes called *nazira*, 'an answer or an imitation'." See Adel T. Adamova, 'The Hermitage Manuscript of Nizami's Khamsa Dated 835/1431' in E. Grube and E. Sims (eds.) *Islamic Art* V, 75.

[7] "In religion, as in magic, the periodic recurrence of anything signifies primarily that a mythical time is *made present* […] The time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made *present*, "re-presented" so to speak, however far back it may have been in ordinary reckoning." Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 392.

[8] Despite some of the flaws of Panofsky's iconographical method (the lack of attention to conventions of naturalism) it still has something to teach the Mughal/Persian subfield of art history, at least as it is practised today where the third level of analysis is rarely attempted. At the first level of analysis individual elements of an image are identified; at the second level the ostensible topic of the image is determined; and at the third level the underlying meaning is construed. In Mughal and Persian art, there is the example of a man on a horse, an old lady holds on to the rein of the man's horse, they seem to be having a conversation The second level of analysis consists of the description and classification of images based on knowledge of mainly literary sources and these details can also be identified with themes and concepts. In this example, they are the basic

elements from the scene of the story of the Sultan Sanjar listening to the grievances of an oppressed subject, there may be many other references to emperors or leaders on horses, encountering their subjects, it may be a mytheme. The third level of interpretation consists of what Panofsky called "synthetic intuition", familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind, conditioned by personal psychology and '*Weltaunschaung*'. This intuition can be honed by a broader knowledge of comparative traditions, literatures and disciplines and a broader knowledge of civilisations. In the Mughal context, the illustration of the Sultan Sanjar episode has been transposed to a Mughal setting with a Mughal noble in Mughal clothes with Mughal attendants. Such a scene is meant to appeal to a viewer with a knowledge of art history, specifically Persian prototypes on which the painting is based, and to the viewer's sense that justice is a concept that is best served by clear channels of communication between the king and his subjects. The tradition boasts of the virtues of a listening king, valued equally in the Mughal period as in the period of the golden rule of the great kings of the past. Such a miniature signifies the continuous history of just kings and implies that the Mughal emperors shared in this noble lineage. See later analysis for more conclusions.

[9] Similarly in semiotics, meaning is attached to a sentence, not to a phoneme, in other words, context provides meaning, not just singular motifs but 'the whole picture.' For intertextual studies see Julia Kristeva, *Séméiôtikè. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris, 1969, 115. See also U.J. Hubel, *Intertextuality, Allusion and Quotation. An International Bibliography* (New York, 1989).

[10] See Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 206. Similar conclusions about intertextuality have been made by David Roxburgh, who references several other authors who have studied this phenomenon in Persian literature. He describes a process of thematic linkages in Persian writing, in particular with Dust Muhammad's preface to the Bahram Mirza album. This is a kind of intertextuality for non-Western literature where, "Allusions function across a body of interrelated stories […] each story referencing the other by substitution and repetition." Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 111, footnote 110. Comparing Mughal intertextuality with the Safavid necessarily leads to different conclusions. This is so especially as a large part of Mughal intertextuality is with Safavid illustrated books, whereas Safavid culture, however contemporary with the Mughal period appears to have remained largely unaffected by literature and poetry of the Indian subcontinent. It is remarkable however, that the pattern of intertextuality in each culture is structured along broadly similar lines, with shared mythic features; this is mainly because both cultures hark back to poetic imagery dominated by the same figures: Firdausi, Nizami, Hafiz et. al., and of course, the shared heritage of *Qur'anic* traditions.

[11]For a good introduction to the many allusions used by Nizami for the tale of Bahram Gur, many taken from a diversity of theological traditions, see Michael Barry, *Colour and Symbolism in Islamic Architecture*, 277-293.

[12] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pl. xxv and pl. xxvii.

[13] In *Prefacing the Image*, Roxburgh uses the term "intervisuality", which suggests a general phenomenon of reading one image and comparing it with another. Roxburgh's study is mainly based on textual analysis of prefaces to albums. "Intertextual" processes in painting have been analysed by Wendy Steiner, "Intertextuality in Painting", *American*

Journal of Semiotics, 3, (1985), 57-67; and Norman Bryson, "Intertextual and Visual Poetics" *Critical Texts, 4* (1987), 5. ff.

[14] Claude Lévi-Strauss characterised this process as "bricolage" a collection of improvised structures created by the appropriation of "pre-existent materials that are ready-to-hand." Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson [1962] 1974), 74.

[15] The creative act of the work of art is shared also by the reader/viewer "who creates an imaginative cosmos out of the library of all that he has read." Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth: An Introduction* (New York and London: Garland, 1998), 77.

[16] I am aware of the critique of the poststructuralists, and I use the term structural patterns advisedly, not as frozen reductive, geometries but as one aspect of a greater visual polysemy that engages the dynamism and process of phenomenological consciousness involved in pictorial perception.

[17] Bourdieu, Pierre, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 13.

[18] For various Mughal versions see Kessler, 'In the Company of the Enlightened: Portraits of Mughal Holy Men' in Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art*, 18-21.

[19] Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnson, trans. *Dissemination* (London: Athlone, 1981), 70-84.

[20] This has been discussed briefly as the so-called "dialogue" form of composition pointed out originally by Bürgel, *Feather of Simurgh*, 152.

[21] E. H. Gombrich, for example, in his analysis of Botticelli's *Primavera* c. 1478 notes that the painting of the pagan goddess is organised in a symmetrical and triangular *sacre conversazione* form, usually reserved for pictures of the Virgin Mary with saints (it is strange, however that he failed to mention that this may also be read as a *mandorla* (almond) form which is par excellence, the compositional form reserved for sacred personages such as the Holy Virgin, and strengthens his case), and Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* c. 1486 is organised along the lines of a Baptism of Christ. Thus one of the semantic chains mentioned by Mircea Eliade of the woman, sea, shell, fecundity, birth, rebirth (of Christianity) is thus expressed in both textual and painterly form. E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images. Studies in the Art of the Renaissance II* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 31-81, 53, 63 and 73. Roxburgh implies as much when he writes "Each work of prose or poetry occupied its place in a sequence of texts that ran backward and forward in time." D. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 16 and in connection with art describes "an aesthetic of familiarity, of repetition and perpetual return, of always already knowing" *ibid.* 17. This suggests an aesthetic built on the premise of repetition; an aesthetic that also has the metaphoric power to bring to mind the cyclical return (or resilience) of archetypes.

[22]1430, an illustration of disputing physicians in a *Khamsa* painted in Shiraz, formerly in the Kraus Collection, Ernst. J. Grube, *Islamic paintings from the 11th to 18th centuries in the Collection of Hans Kraus* (New York, no date), pl. 37. There is also an anthology of 1468, Add. 16,561 f.1v-2 of scholars gathering around a fountain, see Ivan Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Timurides* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner,

1954), pl. XLV; in a 1485 manuscript in the Bodleian Library Ms. Elliot 317, f. 21b, courtiers gather around in a similar pattern, waiting for their king, and in a *Meeting of the Clans* from a dispersed folio of Shah Tahmasp's *Khamsa* (Fogg Art Museum 1958. 75); there is a comparable grouping, symmetry and composition to that in the British Library *Khamsa* version, cf. S. Canby, ed., *Humayun's Garden Party*, pl. 6. In the same illustrative tradition is a folio of a *Learned Discussion* in the Bodleian Library c.1575, J.28.5, publ. Basil Robinson, *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, the Keir Collection* (London: Faber, 1976), pl. 222. Another picture of disputing physicians is published in *J.R.A.S* Bombay, vol. VIII. 1928. There is also an illustration of this subject in the Walters Art Gallery, datable to c.1550-60, see G. D. Guest, *Shiraz Painting of the 16th Century*, pl. 42, this has an elaborate composition of background planes, as in the illustration in the *Khamsa* of Nizami, British Library. Also comparable is an illustration of *Lisan al-Tayr,* by Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, which was repainted in the Mughal library.

[23] Sir Thomas. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), pl. XLIII.

[24]See an Anthology of 1427 in the Berenson Collection , f. 50v, which parallels the composition in a picture of *Iskandar and the Seven Sages.* Publ.E. Sims et. al, *Peerless Images*, fig. 127.

[25]From a *Hayrat al-Abrar* of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, 1485, Herat, Bodleian, Elliot. 287, see Ivan Stchoukine, *Les Peintures Des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami au Topkapi Sarayi Muzesi d'Istanbul* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1977), pl. LXXII.

[26]Collection of B. Berenson, see T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pl. XL.

[27] *Iskandar-nama* Or. 13529, Norah M. Titley, *Miniatures from Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1977), 136. But also see Nizami addressing his son, Muhammad, attributed to Bihzad, Herat, 1482, an album page from the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva.

[28]See a folio, c. 1515-20 Ms. Marsh 517, f. 34a, for the same symmetrical grouping, publ. Basil Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pl. X and in a Herat manuscript of 1490 entitled, *A Master and his Disciples* in the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, no. 424, publ. W. T. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision,* cat. no. 155; see also a learned discussion in a 1491 manuscript, publ. A. Ivanov and O. F. Akimushkin, *Persidskie Miniatyury XIV-XVII VV* (Academia Nauk, St. Petersburg, SSSR, 1968), pl. II and Ms. Elliot 163, dated 1593, f. 11b, also a learned discussion, pl. XXXIV.

[29]Topkapi H. 770/K. 437, f. 360, d. 1512. See I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Timurides*, pl. LVIIIb.

[30]Accademia dei Lincei, Ms. A. B. 9, f. 303, c.1590.

[31]Bodleian Library, Elliot 339 (Ethé 2120), f. 95b, 1485, Herat.

[32]A *Garshasp-nama,* Or. 12,985 in Anthony Welch, *Artists For The Shah* (Camb. Mass. : Yale University Press, 1976), pl. 3.

[33] Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas Missouri, attributed to the artist Balchand, reproduced in E. Smart 'Balchand' in Pal, ed., *Master Artists*, 139.

[34] See also a very clear example from a Samarqand *Haft Paykar* of Nizami, 1572-3 in Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pl. I.
[35] Bodleian Library MS. Elliot 339, f. 95b, 1485, publ. T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pl. XLIII.
[36]Bodleian Library MS. Elliot 287, f. 24a, dated 1485, called a disputation of doctors, although the figural arrangement suggests a resolution of conflict, the central figure teaching subordinate figures from a position of authority. See B. Gray, *Persian Painting*, pl. 6.
[37] See also, a painting of Timur and Amir Husain in a *Timur-nama* manuscript, Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting*, 86.
[38] It only adds strength to the argument to consider that a mere variation of the figural composition of the disputing physicians story in the British Library *Khamsa* Or. 2265, Tabriz, 1539-43 is enough to suggest a different gloss on the story. The illustration places the dispute between the rival physicians in a format appropriate for showing the king and his advisors in formal session. This suggests that the physicians were vying for an exalted position at court. The fact that the defeated physician, who has fallen out of place, disturbing the symmetry only adds to the drama. However, the painting still plays with the idea of a prior order which has been broken. See T. W. Arnold, *Islamic Painting*, pl. LXI.
[39] Parallel to this cognitive process is the association between god's original act of creation and the artist's act of creation; the original takes place outside of time and without labour, while the artist's is distinguished by these principles. Dust Muhammad implies this; god can create matter, man only fashions it. Roxburgh *Prefacing the Image*, 108.
[40] *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. II, 29.
[41] B. Taylor, *A Visit to India, China, and Japan in the Year 1853* (New York: G. Puttnam and Co., 1859), 124.
[42]Published in Kessler, 'In the Company of the Enlightened: Portraits of Mughal Holy Men' in Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art*, 18-21.
[43] Manuscript of a *Diwan* of Ibrahim Mirza, published Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the Indian Office Library* (London: British Library, 1981), no. 77. A similar composition appears in a king visiting a holy man in a Persian *Khamsa* in the British Library, Or. 6810 and in another *Khamsa* Or. 25,900.
[44] British Library Or. 6810
[45]See A. Welch and S. C. Welch, *Art of the Islamic Book, The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Ithaca and London, 1982), pl. 59a.
[46]Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings From the Chester Beatty Library* (2 Vols. London, 1995), colour plate 14.
[47]Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, pl. 1.192. Basawan painted a prince and a hermit c.1595 also at the Chester Beatty Library publ. *ibid*., pl. 1. 238. Dharamdasa was responsible for a very similar but more complex *Iskandar Seeking the Advice of Aflatun* in a dispersed *Khamsa* now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913), reproduced T. Bowie, et al., *East-West in Art, Patterns*

of Aesthetic and Cultural Relationships (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), fig. 309.

[48]T. W. Arnold, ed., and J. V. S. Wilkinson, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty. A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures* vol. II (London, 1936), pl. XXVI, 89.

[49]Reproduced in R. Skelton, 'Iranian Artists in the Service of Humayun', in S. Canby, ed, *Humayun's Garden Party*, fig. 3. Another Mughal miniature shows the King of Yemen visiting Shaykh San'an at his hermitage in the wilderness, *Sotheby's Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Wednesday, 19 October, 1994, Lot 147, 114. Two other examples that follow the general compositional rules and include similar details required of the genre are published in *Sotheby's Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Wednesday, 26 April, 1995, Lot 126, 119, Lot 128, 121.

[50]Published Gregory Minissale, 'Piecing Together the Emperor Akbar's Lost *Sharaf-name'*, *Oriental Art*, Vol. XLIV, No. 3 (1998), 67-71.

[51] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot*, pl. XXII.

[52]Broadly in agreement with this view: "We cannot know for certain whether these were commissioned as propaganda or for personal delectation. However, consciously or unconsciously, the artists followed a venerable tradition established hundreds of years earlier in the courts of Iran and Central Asia" Kessler 'In the Company of the Enlightened: Portraits of Mughal Holy Men' in Rochelle L. Kessler et. al., *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art*, 33.

[53] Musée Guimet Paris, No. 7171. See also, the posthumous portrait of *Akbar Visits the Hindu Saint Jadrup*, 1625-30 in Kessler, *Studies in Islamic and Later Indian Art*, 25, fig. 3. The saint is seated outside of a cave-like structure, which is obviously part of the visual tradition linking the cave with knowledge.

[54] Apart from the association with wise men or sages there are several other kinds of paintings that feature caves, obviously a feature that was highly attractive to the Mughal vision. See a treasure hoard in the cave dug up for the king, *Anwar-i Suhayli* British Library, Add. MS. 18579 by Aqa Riza. His son, Abu'l Hasan painted *Prince Dabshalim's visit to the cave of the sage Bidpa'y* in the same manuscript, which shows both figures in a cave.

[55] See Roxburgh *Prefacing the Image*, 177.

[56] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pl. XXII.

[57] Eleanor Sims et. al, *Peerless Images*, 21.

[58] Now in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine Library.

[59] Christies catalogue, *Islamic Art, Indian Miniatures, Rugs and Carpets Including Property from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection*, Tuesday, 18 October, 1994, Lot 12, 13.

[60] *Sotheby's Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Wednesday, 19 October, 1994, Lot 112, 88, f.310b, by L'al.

[61]Ian Netton, 'Towards a Modern Tafsir of Sürat al-Kahf: Structure and Semiotics', *Journal of. Qur'anic Studies* 2:1 (2000), pp. 67–89.

[62] For an overview of the development of Persian *Khamsa* illustration cycles see Soucek, *Illustrated Mss. of Nizami's Khamseh 1386-1482* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Department of Fine Arts, University of New York, 1971). For earlier versions of displaying these conventions see a 1463 *Sanjar and the Old Woman* in the Goloubew collection, Paris with female onlookers in a building, publ.W. Schulz, *Die Persische-*

Islamische Miniaturmalerei (Leipzig, 1914), pl. 40; a 1470 folio pasted onto f. 279 of Ms. 3448 (Ethé 2831), a *Zafar-nama*, publ. Robinson, *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, the Keir Collection*, 80. Many illustrations of this manuscript in the Bodleian Library (for example, Ms. Elliot 194) were repainted in Mughal India, which explains the Mughal familiarity with the pictorial conventions. Ms. Elliot 192, f. 17a, is a fine Turkoman painting where the monarch wears the crown most frequently seen in the Demotte *Shah-nama*. See also a comparable early Safavid 1508 version in A. A. Ivanov and O. F. Akimushkin, *Persidskie Miniatyury*, pl. 26.

[63] British Library Or. 2265. See also, Lawrence Binyon, *The Poems of Nizami* (London, 1928), pl. III

[64] British Library, Or. 6810, for illustrations of this manuscript see F. R. Martin and T.W. Arnold, *The Nizami Ms.* (Vienna: 1926).

[65]In the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Persan 985). What makes the painting a *tour de force* is that it is a very detailed composition over two pages. All of the many individuals represented, which are already far more in number than in any other version, are rendered in great physiognomic detail suggesting that they were overpainted at a later stage. Publ. E. Blochet, *Les Peintures des manuscrits orientaux de la Bibiothèque Nationale, Paris* (Paris, 1914-20), pl. XLII.

[66]In the Topkapi Sarayı Museum 770/K, 437Folio 17v, publ. I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures Des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami*, pl. LIX.

[67] British Museum, Or. 13,297, folio 16a, see Ernst J. Grube, *Studies in Islamic Painting* (London, 1995), 30, fig. 10. Another illustration which dispenses entirely with supporting figures is folio 16r of the British Museum *Khamsa* Or. 6810 dated 1494-5. Cf. also, the Princeton University Library *Khamsa* 779 for another early (1446) treatment of this episode, and another dated 1507-8 in the Saltykov Shchedrin Public Library, inv. Dorn 340, Shiraz, which features the same ingredients.

[68]British Library, Or. 11847. See Norah Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India. The British Library Collections* (London: The British Library, 1983), plate 13.

[69] See E. J. Grube, *Islamic paintings from the 11th to 18th centuries in the Collection of Hans Kraus* (New York, no date), pl. 49, and pl. 81 for an early, c. 1515 Safavid version of *Sanjar and the Old Woman*.

[70]A mode of copying whereby a blank sheet is pricked with a pin to follow the outlines of the painting beneath it, soot is then smoothed over the pricked copy over a fresh sheet to reveal a sooty outline. The original is reversed. This is evident in a 1476-7 Shiraz manuscript, Topkapi R. 874/K. 411, f. 19v, I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures Des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami*, pl. XLIII and in Ms. R. 855/K. 406, f. 20, dated 1446, *ibid*., pl. XXIV, both 'in reverse' of the Indian compositions. This is also the case in two Royal Asiatic Society manuscripts 246 (f. 16b) and 248a (f. 18).

[71] John Rylands Library Ms. Pers. No. 20, f. 148a

[72] See H. Knížkóva and J. Marek, *The Jengiz Khan Miniatures from the Court of Akbar the Great*, pl. 34.

[73]For similar conclusions, see Priscilla Soucek, 'Comments On Persian Painting', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 7, #1-2, 1974, 74: "Battle scenes occurring in historical texts and battle

scenes found in copies of the *Shah-nama* are virtually interchangeable." Apparently, so are the hunting scenes.

[74] The verse accompanying it reads, "Heaven is drawing the horse of the support of religion come and see: its angel has put his hand in the stirrup" cf. *Diwan-i Hafiz*, eds. M. Qazvini and Dr. Qasim Ghani (Tehran, n.d.), 292. The poetic verse may in turn have been inspired by the visual convention in painting that the poet must have been familiar with.

[75]Published in Sotheby's catalogue *Arts of the Islamic World*, 15 October, 2003, Lot 24. Other similar compositions see a painting in the Persian *Khamsa* Or. 6810 of Iskandar sitting with seven sages and in the Royal Asiatic Society's Ms. 246, f. 311; the Bodleian Library's Ms. Elliot 194, f. 360a and Ms. Elliot 339, a fine Herat style *Sadd-i Iskandar* by Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i. See also a painting of Dindar giving advice to Jalal, Tabriz 1502-3 now in the Uppsala University Library. In most cases, a similar composition of a diagonal line of sages leading up to the king's right persists.

[76] See, for example a prince, probably Akbar, in discussion with advisors published in Sotheby's catalogue *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, 29th April, 1998, Lot 88.

[77]By Narsingh c. 1597, Chester Beatty Library. Dublin. However, see also a folio from the now dispersed *Tarikh-i Alfi* 1592-94 at the Freer Gallery in Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image, Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington DC, 1981), 98.

[78]Ettinghausen, 'The Emperor's Choice', pls. 10 and fig. 14.

[79] It has been suggested that this figure is actually King Adil Shah II of Bijapur A. K. Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time*, 222.

[80]See H. Glück, *Die Indischen Miniaturen des Haemza-Romanes* (Vienna: 1925), Tafel 1, (W. 43). Comparable also is *An Author Presenting a Volume to a Prince*, c.1595, in the Johnson Album 8. 3 in the British Library, publ. T. Falk and M. Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the Indian Office Library*, pl. 9.

[81]Published G. Sen, *Paintings From the AkbarNama* (Calcutta, 1984), pl. 7.

[82] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 56

[83] John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India* f. 339b, fig. 160.

[84] This composition is also used with presentations of sons at court. See the British Library *Khamsa*'s Nizami entrusting his son to the care of the Prince of Shirvan. Bulaqi overpainted the faces of the original Akbar period painting, probably in the Jahangir period. See Gregory Minissale, 'Three New Inscriptions in the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami (British Library Or. 12,208)', *Oriental Art*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1 (1998). There is an exact copy of this picture in the Sotheby's Catalogue, *Fine Oriental Miniatures, Manuscripts and Qajar Paintings*, Lot 36, 9 December, 1975. See also, the presentation of 'Abd al-Rahim Khan to Akbar and Humayun before Babur from an *Akbar-nama*, private collection, Paris, *Sotheby's New York*, 25-3-1987, lot 183 and lot 184. The stance of Nizami and the general composition of the scene appear to conform to the visual myth of encounters between emperors and shaykhs, or emperors and poets. See the illustrations published by Ettinghausen, 'The Emperor's Choice', *De Artibus Opuscula XL*. 98-122. This interpictorial link is called "conceptual type" in Ettinghausen, 113. The same composition may be seen illustration of a now dispersed *Gulistan* of Sa'di by Manohar, *The Undoing of the Ill-natured Wazir* c.1610-15. Beach, et. al, *The Grand Mogul*, fig. 19.

Another scene using this compositional idea is in the same *Gulistan* manuscript, called *The Padshah and the Slave Girl.* Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, fig. 16.

[85] "To follow a story is to actualise it by reading it." Ricoeur, in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 151.

[86] "[…] by its repetition the act coincides with its archetype and time is abolished." M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 392. Repetition here may be signified in visual terms by repeating compositional conventions.

[87] This is an established tradition of making archetypes present and alive, rather than a mere rhetorical device. D. Roxburgh describes some calligraphy by Shah Mahmud who follows the method of calligraphy of the "inventor of the archetype." Roxburgh interprets this as making the inventors "present through Shah Mahmud's exercise in emulation." *Prefacing the Image*, 161. One suspects that the Chest of Witnessing mentioned in the Bahram Mirza album preface discussed by Roxburgh is also a poetic metaphor for the original archetypes of images, which must refer also to the original act of creation of the world of appearances. Moreover, this is an allusion to the relationship between Ideas and sense particulars as developed in the Neo-Platonic tradition. The archetypes in the Chest of Witnessing act as models for (and are pre-existent to) the finest images mortals can make on earth, and when a human artist has reached such heights, the archetypes are re-instantiated or reflected.

[88] It is important that Mani is a culture-hero of the type that teaches generations to come to the arts. This type is found in mythic stories the world over and their function is to "tame and shape nature into its present form. Thus, these myths narrate the appearance of what did not exist before, or what was denied to man." Eleazar Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth* (London: Routledge, 2000), 180. In the Catholic tradition, a similar mythology is attached to St. Luke, the patron saint of painting. Both Islamic and Christian traditions reveal a structural, almost grammatical need in myth to attribute certain arts or crafts to demi-gods, prophets or to divine inspiration in order to enhance their magical status and their mystical links with the dream world and the world of the imagination. In the *Shah-nama*, the legendary King Jamshid teaches the various crafts of making silk and brocade. In the traditions regarding the prophets in Islam, Adam was taught the crafts of the blacksmith and the carpenter.

[89] "this archetypal characteristic is communicated through its having been removed from the human order. In it, we see the realisation of an image not-produced-by-the-hand-of-man (*archeiropoiety*). An angel often guides the hand of the holy evangelist who is but the instrument of divine will." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 228.

[90] There are three closely related miniatures illustrating the same episode. Perhaps deceived by the image himself, Basil Robinson titled a similar illustration, '*The Painter and the Drowned Dog*' (*sic*.) in Johnson Ms. 387 (Ethé 976, 1200), which is a 1505 Turkoman-style *Khamsa*, see B. Robinson, *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, the Keir Collection* (London, 1976). There are two pictures in the Topkapi Saray Museum, one H. 753/K. 470 from an undated *Khamsa*, see Ivan Stchoukine, 'La Khamseh de Nizami, H. 753 du Topkapi Sarayı Muzesi d'Istanbul', *Syria*, t. LXI, 1972. In this illustration, Mani is depicted kneeling on the ground with a brush in his hand, and there is a *qalamdan* (pencase) with brushes and colours in it next to his side, as he appears in

the British Library *Khamsa* illustration. The other version is published from a Shiraz *Khamsa*, dated 1490. H. 1008/K. 416 in Ivan Stchoukine, *Les Peintures Des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami*, pl. LI.

[91] More encouragement for the development of a subtle interpictorial aesthetic was the established practice of acquiring illustrated books from various non-Mughal sources which were reworked: Mughal paintings were inserted into Persian manuscripts from earlier centuries and in some cases, side by side with paintings from those periods. This has been called "tinkering" Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 87, a description that does not begin to answer the question why reworking was felt to be appropriate or necessary. The most obvious reason was to complete the manuscript with the underlying assumption that inserting Mughal miniatures to old and incomplete Persian manuscripts would add value to them; otherwise we must assume that the Mughal artists were guilty of premeditated vandalism. If they had found these practices to be aesthetically and ideologically suspect, one assumes they would have refrained from doing so entirely. The refurbishment of incomplete Persian manuscripts strongly suggests a custom underpinned by a sense of tradition and most probably also a belief in the immanence of past quality in the present. The end result from the Mughal perspective was continuity; two different times and two different worlds integrated into one.

[92] For a description of the incident by Sir Thomas Roe, see Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 202.

[93] "Metaphor is a clear case where polysemy is preserved […] Two lines of interpretation are open at the same time and several readings are allowed together and put into tension. This effect has been compared to stereoscopic vision." Ricoeur in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 83. "The strategy of metaphor is heuristic fiction for the sake of redescribing reality. With metaphor we experience the metamorphosis of both language and reality." Ricoeur, in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 85.

[94] "At the orders of his majesty the Emperor Akbar of Faridun's pomp and Sikandar's [might]. M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri, A Sourcebook*, 34.

[95] The figure does bear a resemblance to that shown repeatedly in the *Akbar-nama* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, especially ff. 55 and 56, *Akbar Stages a Shikar near Lahore.* He was not the first Muslim sovereign to be portrayed as a legendary hero. A century and a half earlier, it has been suggested that Ibrahim Sultan had himself shown hunting in the *Shah-nama* of 1425 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Timurides*, pl. XXII and it has even been argued that in the Tabriz *Khamsa* Or. 2265 (c.1539-43), there is a picture of Bahram Gur, said to be in the likeness of Shah Tahmasp, pinning an ass's hoof to its ear with an arrow, folio 211a. Priscilla Soucek suggests that Prince Baysunghur was painted to appear as Bahram Gur and that Baysunghur's court musician was also painted into the picture in the place of Azadah, usually depicted with a harp in such scenes. See Soucek, 'Comments On Persian Painting', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 7, #1-2, 1974, 78.

[96] See Akbar hunting at Palam by Manohar in Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 38.

[97] A composition from a Baysunghur period *Khamsa* of Nizami (c.1425-50) was probably pricked and then a pounced copy made for the *Khamsa* of Nizami dated 1525, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, called *Bahram Gur's Best Shot*. The latter manuscript, of which only five miniatures survive is likely to have served as an

immediate model for Akbar's studio, as it was presented to him by the governor of the Punjab, Mun'im Khan in 1580. This is recorded in an illuminated medallion, f. 1a. See B. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Paintings at the Bodleian Library*, 389.

[98] The Herat *Khamsa* Or. 6810, f. 157a, has Bahram Gur fighting the dragon in much the same way, and was owned by the Mughals. The scene of *Bahram Gur Killing the Dragon* in the British Museum, Add. 27, 261, conforms to the convention, as does *Bahram Gur and the Dragon* in Or 6810 and *Bahram Gur Hunting Lions* in Or. 2265. In the J. Rylands Library, Manchester, a *Khamsa* of 1444-5, Pers. Ms. 36, the same scene spills over the frame into the margin. I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures Des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami*, pl. XII and plate LXXXII shows another version from the *Khamsa*, Add. 25900, f. 161. Another copy of *Bahram Gur Hunting* is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 144, f. 157b.

[99] Early seventeenth century, 1927-4-13-01 BM, listed by N. Titley, *Miniatures From Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 136.

[100] See Seyller, et. al., *The Adventures of Hamza*, cat. 5.

[101] Qandahari in the *Tarikh-i Akbari*, quoted in Brand and Lowry, *Fathepur Sikri*, 294.

[102] *Muntakhab-i Tavarikh*, Brand and Lowry, *Fathepur Sikri*, 30.

[103] Roxburgh rightly points out that although the figures of speech in the preface to the Bahram Mirza album written by Dust Muhammad were previously considered hackneyed and incapable of signifying anything, they still reveal perceptions about painting that have been neglected. *Prefacing the Image*, 165.

[104] "[…] the simple opposition between mythology and history which we are accustomed to make—is not at all a clear-cut one." C. Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London and New York: Routledge, 1978), 34. Levi-Strauss views history as a continuation of mythology, not in opposition to it. Bronislaw Malinowski concurs: "myth is not merely a story told, but a reality lived. It is not of the nature of a fiction, such as we read today in novels, but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies." B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 100.

[105] See Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 32. With Islamic rulers generally, "an automatic association with Solomon developed for all themes, myths and ideas which pertained to the life of the princes and to its setting" Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (London, 1978), 150, quoted in Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 32.

[106] See Koch, *Mughal Ideology*, 128.

[107] *Akbar-nama* (Bib. Indica) Tr. H. Beveridge, vol. I (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1948), 179-80. Imagery comparing the Mughal emperor with Christ was used for Akbar's son, Jahangir: "By his breath he is Christ, the brightest moon." *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927), 12.

[108] See T. W. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 27-28.

[109] The literal translation of Miryam Makani is "dwelling with (the Virgin) Mary" cf. H. Blochmann, Tr., *'Ain-i Akbari*, Vol. I , 48.

[110] Brand and Lowry, *Fathepur Sikri*, 137.

[111] See also, "Akbar not only associated himself with historical, mythical and spiritual kingship to strengthen his authority as a ruler, but also widened this frame of reference

and sought access to the contemporary family of rulers of the world." Seyller, et. al., *The Adventures of Hamza*, 22.

[112] Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, pls. 3, 4.

[113] "We will look at Abu'l Fazl's work with some care. For though it expresses a highly personal vision; and though so far as it illustrates an age, it belongs specially to Indian Islamdom; yet it draws on resources largely common at least to all Persian Islamdom in the gunpowder-empires period, and so points up possibilities open to the whole society." Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 Vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 74.

[114] "Allah is he who effects creation […] therefore he repeats it." *Qur'an*, xxix, 20.

[115] This dual conception of time, which has been called "exemplarity of history", was identified in Persian historiography by Julie Meisami in 'The past in the service of the present: Two views of History in Medieval Persia' *Poetics Today* 14, 2 (Summer 1993): 247-75; 270. Roxburgh also identifies this exemplarity, and gives a brief bibliography of two later examples of this phenomenon in European historiography; he also states here that in the Persian context (one that is entirely parallel with the Mughal in this regard), "Emphasis should be given here to cyclicality as recurring patterns in historical time" see Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 170, footnote 37.

[116] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 186-187.

[117] British Museum 1913.2-8.1; see Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, frontispiece and fig. 13.

[118] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*,31.

[119] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 33.

[120] Implied by Milo Cleveland Beach writing about these dynastic paintings in Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 160.

[121] See Seyller, 'Hashim', in Pal, *Master Artists*, 115.

[122]Jairpur City Palace Museum, publ. Martin Hattstein and Peter Delius eds., *Islam and Architecture* (Konemann: Cologne, 2000), 414

[123] Reading/apprehending forms of myth are more ingrained processes than the concept of the pre-meditated political manipulation of images. Although some images undoubtedly do condition perceptions about kingship, for example, a painting can have a variety of levels of meaning (literary, emotional, aesthetic) in excess of propagandistic objectives. This may be said of a Jahangir period painting of a flower, as easily as a court painting of the Shah Jahan period.

[124] Jahangir undoubtedly had his eye fixed firmly on his image for posterity: ''This jewel will assuredly hand down my name to posterity more than any written history. The house of Timur may fall, but as long as there is a king, this jewel will have its price." 155. Quoted in Diane Morgan, *Fire and Blood: Rubies in Myth, Magic, and History* (Westport: Greenwood, 2007), 155.

[125] Quoted in Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, 96.

[126] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 209.

[127] Dated 1629. See Seyller, 'Hashim', in Pal, *Master Artists*, 114.

[128] "The Mughals were quick to realise the potential of such images for their own purposes and surrounded themselves with Christian symbols to enhance their aura as semi-divine rulers." Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 137. For a Jahangir period example of the utilisation of these images see Beach and Koch, *ibid*., fig. 29.

[129] Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama,* 29

[130] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 29.

[131] Ghiyas al-Din Khvand Amir' (d. ca. 941/1534) wrote a history of the Timurid and early Safavid periods called the *Habib al-Siyar*.

[132] This is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum 115-1921. I.M and was published in 1922 by C. Stanley Clarke in *Mughal Painting, the School of Jahangir* (London, 1922). For a reproduction see Thackston, *The Jahangirnama,* 173

[133] The image of the two deer may have some relationship however to Buddhist art, two deers are symbolic of the Lord Buddha's first sermon in the deer park.

[134] The dragon and the phoenix also appear on a tent design in a Safavid miniature c. 1540 (see, S. C. Welch, et al, *Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1501-1576* (Cambridge MA) 1980, 168 no. 63); and in an Iranian carpet design, Kashan c. 1600 in V. Enderlein, *Orientalische kelims: Flachgewbe aus Anatolien, dem Iran und dem Kaukasus* (Berlin, 1986), 57, Taf. 1. I would like to thank Dr. Joachim Gierlichs for bringing these to my attention.

[135] In folio 239E from an illustrated manuscript of the *Falnama* produced in Golconda c. 1610-30, now in the Khalili Collection, Solomon sits enthroned with two phoenixes flying above him and there is a dragon at his feet. See M. B. Piotrovsky, ed. *Earthly Beauty, Heavenly Art, Art of Islam* (Amsterdam, 2000), 255

[136] For example, f. 285 of the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami and the opening page of the Kevorkian Album, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York painted for Shah Jahan c. 1645

[137] In the *Padshah-nama* the Emperor *Jahangir* is shown receiving his son on his victorious return from the Deccan. Underneath the awnings made of purple cloth are two gold phoenixes on either side of the throne. See M. C. Beach and E. Koch, *The Padshahnama*, pls. 8, 36. Some royal banners are also decorated with a single phoenix, *ibid.,* pl. 21, 61.

[138] Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection), M.83.1.4; published in D. Walker, *Flowers Underfoot,* 45.

[139] See a leaf from a *Shah-nama* for Shah Tahmasp, Tabriz, c. 1530 publ. T. Falk, ed., *Treasures of Islam* (Geneva, 1995), plate 60 and for a *Shah-nama* for Shah Ismai'l II Qazvin, 1576-77, plate 73. In both cases, the double phoenix is sewn with gold thread on the inside of a tent canopy. In one case, the double phoenix appears on the caparison of the royal horse in the *Shah-nama* for Shah Tahmasp, pl. 46.

[140] H. Beveridge, (tr.) *Maasir al-Umara*, Bibl. Indica 47, Series III.

[141] Michael Camille, 'Seeing and reading: some visual implications of medieval literacy and illiteracy' *Art History* Vol. 8, No. 1, March 1985, 31-32.

[142] "Both text and image are secondary representations, external to, but always referring back to the spontaneous springs of speech." M. Camille, *Art History* Vol. 8, 32.

[143] This instance may be comparable to "medieval pictures [which] cannot be separated from what is a total experience of communication involving simultaneously sight, sound action and physical expression" M. Camille, *Art History* Vol. 8, 43.

[144] "The truth speaks in language as it is continuously produced by speech, through its communiqué of facts, in between the lines, and at anchoring points […] The subject

produces through his speech, a truth which he does not know about […] Truth resides, as it were, in the spaces between one signifier and another, in the holes in the chain." Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* (London: Free Association, 1986), 118.

[145] Eleazar Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 208. Post-Structuralist reactions against binary opposites and dualities notwithstanding, the approach needs to tested in the visual arts in the Mughal period before it is refined or transcended.

[146] Similarly in Firdausi's *Shah-nama*, the device of the cow head mace of Faridun not only defeats the evil Zahhak but links two semantic chains: cow-fertility-kindness (introduced to the reader's mind by the story of the cow Birmiya which offers protection to Faranak in the womb cave) and serpent-mortality-cruelty in the shape of the snake infested Zahhak, struck down with the cow head mace.

[147]Eliade, *Patterns*, 32.

[148]Here we go back to Saussure's basic notion that meaning is created not simply as a result of a sign signifying something, but also through a play of differences and mediations between and among various signs, so that a sign can signify other signs. Mythic narrative has "cells of explanation" that can be "arranged and rearranged" to form new meanings. C Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 34.

[149]For example, "It might be said that the moon shows man his true human condition; that in a sense man looks at himself, and finds himself anew in the life of the moon. That is why the symbolism and mythology of the moon have an element of pathos and at the same time consolation, for the moon governs both death and fertility, both drama and initiation. Though the modality of the moon is supremely one of change, of rhythm, it is equally one of periodic returning; and this pattern of existence is disturbing and consoling at the same time – for though the manifestations of life are so frail that they can suddenly disappear altogether, they are restored in the "eternal returning" regulated by the moon." Eliade, *Patterns*, 186. Hence the significance of the new moon, and the Eid moon, the idea of eternal renewal shared by Muslim and Christian alike.

[150] "[…] sky symbolism was the foundation of a number of rites of ascension, of climbing upwards of initiates and of the coronation, etc. myths (the Cosmic tree, the Cosmic Mountain, the chain of arrows and so on) and legends of the magic flight." Eliade, *Patterns*, 111. The magic flight was familiar to the Mughals in the form of the prophet's *mi'raj* and with stories of the magical bird, the *simurgh.*

[151]"It is as perfectly earthly lord that Akbar is the type-symbol of God, as the sun is His type-symbol in nature." Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, v.III, 78.

[152] Levi-Strauss's terminology. The basic meaning of the myth is not conveyed by the sequence of events but by bundles of semantic meaning, which show through them. Cf. Claude Levi-Strauss, C. Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 40.

[153] Certain sentences and passages in books suggest trains of thought if they do not expressly state them. This is what I understand Ricoeur to mean when he speaks of the text which seeks to place the reader in its meaning, that is, "according to *sens* – in the same direction", Ricoeur in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 60.

[154] Although not explicitly stated in this manner, this is an approach that underpins the analysis of Mughal miniatures taken by Robert Skelton, 'Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting', in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Soucek, 177-

192, and in Ettinghausen, in 'The Emperor's Choice', *De Artibus Opuscula XL*, 98-120. Ettinghausen's approach is also closely aligned to finding visual semantic relationships between the picture of the *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaikh to Kings* and other pictures of the same emperor in audience with Sufi shaykhs. While this article is undoubtedly groundbreaking for its time and remains a model example of research and analysis it did not deal with the relationships between this image and with others to do with emperors and sages, and emperors receiving books from authors; neither does it discuss the fact that the semantic values initiated by the encounter of kings and shaykhs are shared by the Safavids, demonstrated in an inscription on a metal drinking vessel, for example comparing kingship with *darvish*hood or a Sufi's life, see Melikian-Chirvani 'From the Royal Boat to the Beggar's Bowl' in E. Grube E. Sims (eds.) *Islamic Art* II, 3-111. There is a complex semantic pattern underlying the visuality and functions of these metal drinking vessels ("kashkuls" or coco-de-mer shaped begging bowls), of which there are several Mughal examples. Melikian-Chirvani impressively unravels the ancient myth that recurs in the very form of this metal object, teasing out semantic associations from relevant Persian verse, revealing the semantic pattern that links together the form of a crescent shaped drinking vessel with solar and lunar imagery (a conjunction denoting the New Year) and with image of the golden boat carrying the red wine of illumination, also applicable to the Sufi begging bowl which is another set of meanings the metalwork shape is associated with. Melikian-Chirvani also shows mythical substructures and relationships not only by way of quoting relevant inscriptions and poetry, but also with some comparable visual material showing that the shape of the metalwork bowl is similar to representations of Noah's Ark and Jonah's boat on the Lake of Tiberius, for example. In this chapter, I have been very much encouraged by the example of this work.

[155] F. 85b, by Miskina. Listed (but not published), *Sotheby's Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Wednesday, 19 October, 1994, Lot 112, 87.

[156] This is related to the myth of the end of the world by universal conflagration from which the good will escape unharmed, cf. M. Eliade, W. R. Trask, trans., *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1949), 124.

[157] See Christies sale catalogue, *Islamic art and manuscripts*, Tuesday, 16 October, 2001, Lot 76, 63 of a Safavid *Shah-nama*, c. 1570.

[158]Victoria and Albert Museum, see Stronge, pl. 55.

[159] 1605, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, Rogers Fund 55.121.31. The apocalyptic fire is also seen in Persian art, in a *Bustan* of Sa'di, showing Baghdad on fire. See Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl. 137c.

[160] For example, see a page in the Arthur M. Sackler *Khamsa*, Vever Collection, S86.0061, 70r.

[161] See Dick Davis, tr. and ed., *Ferdowsi: The Legend of Seyavash* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

[162] The idea of life springing up from the fire is related to the ancient phoenix from the ashes myth revived by the poetry of 'Attar in his *Mantiq al-Tayr* (*Conference of the Birds*).

[163] In the Book of Daniel 1:6-7, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego sentenced to be burned alive for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's idols, pass through the fire because of their unblemished faith in monotheism.
[164]L. York Leach, *Mughal Paintings From the Chester Beatty Library*, pl. 2.171.
[165] Akbar was also very impressed by the Zoroastrian sacred fire and established one in Fatehpur Sikri with Abu'l Fazl as its minder. See E. Wellesz, *Akbar's Religious Thought Reflected in Mogul Painting* (London, Unwin, 1952) 16.
[166] See Eliade, *Patterns*, 145-146 for an analysis of solar associations.
[167] See Lot 85, Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, (London, 18 October, 1995), 74 and 79.
[168] For an examination of the light imagery employed in descriptions of Mughal kingship see Skelton, *Content and Context*, 180-181.
[169] Anonymous Persian romance, probably based on an Indian original. The painting is attributed to Dawlat, in the Chester Beatty Library, fol. 54r.
[170] This is demonstrated by Melikian Chirvani who shows that the poet Nizami uses such an opposition: "After first describing the wine as illuminating fire rising out of the bowl, the poet coins a paradox: the soul may reach spiritual maturity (the standard expression for "spiritually mature" is *pukhta*, "cooked") by absorbing that "raw blood," wine. In saying so Nizami reminds us of the early symbolism of wine in Zoroastrian times as "blood." He specifies that it is raw, a word with a double meaning. Literally, *kham* is indeed "raw," and by extension, "crude," "rough," "uninitiated," and anything related to the uninitiated in the language of esotericism." Melikian-Chirvani 'From the Royal Boat to the Beggar's Bowl', 50.
[171] John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India* f. 277a, fig. 140.
[172] John Seyller, *Workshop and Patron in Mughal India* f. 313a, fig. 152.
[173] Now in the Walter Art Gallery in Baltimore.
[174] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 132, fig. 146.
[175] In the British Museum, See Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, fig. 27.
[176]C. G. Ellis, 'The Portuguese Carpets of Gujarat', in *Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1972), 267-289, suggests that the motif indicates manufacture in Gujarat: "Bahadur Shah was the last great ruler of Gujarat, so would it not be more natural that his memory be perpetuated in his own realm as a theme for art works?", *ibid*., 286. The argument is somewhat undermined by the fact that it would be illogical to perpetuate a moment of ignominy, which suggests that if it was Bahadur Shah, the motif was perpetuated by his enemies rather that his followers or compatriots in Gujarat.
[177] Or. 12, 988, f. 66a
[178] Seyller, et. al., *The Adventures of Hamza*, pl. 27.
[179] Enki was associated with law and water. Trials by ordeal would be decided when the accused would be thrown into the Euphrates to let Enki decide their innocence or guilt. If Enki kept the accused in the river, drowning them, they were presumed guilty. If Enki threw them back on to land, they were innocent.
[180] Publ. Stuart Cary Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, pl. 9.
[181]This particular episode appears only in the Dihlavi work not the Nizami. It does however appear in European manuscripts of the story of Alexander.

[182] See Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, fig. 15.

[183] Many of these exist in the *Hamza-nama* itself, which contains many pictures that feature water as a main part of the visual and textual narrative, as well as one of the main features of the myth: the sea monster. The same vastly incalculable and malicious force is evident in other pages. See Seyller, et. al., *The Adventures of Hamza*, pls. 36, 41, 50, 51. For another example of the sea monster see in a different manuscript from a later period see a painter of a passenger rescued from drowning in a *Gulistan* of Sa'di c. 1609-10 mentioned above, Pal, *Master Artists*, fig. 16.

[184] In Mughal painting, the appearance of a fabulous fish occurs not only in the two dynastic portraits of Jahangir, one of him shooting the severed head of Malik 'Ambar on which the world and under it a bull stand, which is based on a verse by Farid al-Din 'Attar (see Skelton, *Content and Context*, 182) but also in another painting showing him shooting an arrow at the figure of poverty, beneath the world in this picture is a fish with the figure of Jonah lying over it. In a *Gulistan of Sa'di* c. 1609-10, fishermen try to capture a fabulous giant fish (Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 142, fig. 162). There is a painting of *Babur Presented with a Fish* in the Keir Collection (B. Robinson, ed., *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, the Keir Collection*, pl. 34. There also several pictures of an angel carrying a fish painted in the Mughal period, for example, see a painting of the late Akbar period in Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 102, fig. 109 and another fig. 25; another in the 'Leningrad' Album, now in the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg and in the 'Wantage Album' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. These are invariably thought to be pictures based on European prints of the Angel of Tobias, even though in these images, the angel never actually appears to hold the fish but it is described doing so in the *Qisas al-Anbiya* (Stories of the Prophet), which is probably the story that paintings of this kind actually refer to. The angel with a fish is a painting that appears in three illustrated *Qisas* manuscripts in order to illustrate the story of Namrud (Nimrod), the defiant king who constructs a flying throne and floats up to a place between heaven and earth and shoots an arrow upwards in an attempt to kill god. The arrow returns to him soaked in blood, believed to be the blood of a fish that lived in the ocean between heaven and earth. "Jibrail [Gabriel] is said to have caught this fish, which readily volunteered to sacrifice itself for the sake of God." Rachel Milstein, et. al, *Stories of the Prophets, Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya* (Conta Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1999), 119.

[185] Milstein, et. al, *Stories of the Prophets*, fig. 70.

[186]Illustration 119 in the Chester Beatty *Raj Kunwar*. The subject is dealt with briefly by Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, illustrations L a, and b. One suspects that there is more to various paintings of Akbar on a boat crossing a river (see the Chester Beatty *Akbar-nama*, c. 1605 previously in the Pozzi Collection) than mere historical faithfulness. The Emperor, slightly larger in scale than the other figures in the painting, appears to cross the river fearlessly and rather conspicuously, which probably explains the reason for the painting: that he is not afraid of the dreaded fate of dying by drowning. With perhaps even more bravado, and intended as evidence of another act of mythical heroism, he is shown taming the savage elephant Haw'ai over a bridge of boats no less, while many of his subjects appear either to panic or to be near drowning themselves. See Rogers,

Mughal Miniatures, pl. 29. Other paintings that demonstrate the Mughal awe of wild rivers and the sea is a painting of Jalal al-Din Khwarzmshah miraculously escaping Chingiz Khan across the Indus from the *Chingiz khan-nama*, see Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, frontispiece, and Basawan's painting of the *Simurgh*, the fabulous giant bird, with a figure hanging on to its talons for dear life with two other figures in its beak, flying over a stormy sea replete with mythical monsters and thrashing fish. Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection, see Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, pl. 81.

[187] An observation made in Rachel Milstein, et. al, *Stories of the Prophets*, 114. Two notable visualisations of Khizr in the Mughal period appear in the British Library *Khamsa of Nizami* and a little known *Sharaf-nama* manuscript (possibly from a larger *Khamsa* manuscript). See G. Minissale, "Rediscovering the Emperor Akbar's Lost *Sharaf-name*" *Oriental Art*, Vol. XLIV, No. 3 (1998), 67-71.

[188]"Living water, the fountains of youth, the Water of Life, and the rest, are all mythological formulae for the same metaphysical and religious reality: life, strength and eternity are contained in water." Eliade, *Patterns*, 193. But interlinked to these values of rebirth are purity, ritual cleansing and renewal, all of which the Muslim participates in literally and symbolically when doing daily ablutions before prayer. Water bestows life; it is also, like life, a gift from god. In the *Qur'an* at the beginning of creation, The Throne of God was set upon the water and god "created every living thing from water." For these interpretations and other analyses of the symbolism of water, see, Titus Burckhardt, *Mirror of the Intellect, Essays on Traditional Science and Sacred Art* (Cambridge, Quinta Essentia, 1987), 129.

[189] Rachel Milstein, et. al, *Stories of the Prophets*, 115

[190] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 87, XXI

[191] See Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 58, pl. 20.

[192] The Mughals also collected scenes of boats in tempests. There is a scene of two boats struggling against a tempest in the Johnson Album (1920-9-17-032), and a *Sea of Galilee* painting at the British Museum (BM 1920. 9-17. 031), a Mughal tinted European print.

[193] Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab al-Lubab*, I, 469; translated by E. Koch in Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, 180.

[194] This is amply demonstrated in Roxburgh who quotes several Persian authors who write about the beauty and perfection of certain books, mainly in the prefaces to these books, comparing them to heavenly archetypes and comparing god's creation to a great book or "album of the sky" Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 92-93. These prefaces also feature "the correspondence between Creation and albums." We come across the "album of fortune"; "the album of heaven"; "the variegated album of time"; " Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 106.

[195] Another example is a painting by Manohar and the scribe Muhammad Husayn al-Kashmiri in a *Gulistan* manuscript, 1581. See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 137.

[196] This point has been elaborated by Erica Cruikshank-Dodd, 'The image of the Word, notes on the religious iconography of Islam', *Berytus, Archaeological Studies*, Volume XVIII, 1969, 35-79. Dodd explained that the book as an image in Islamic art represents not only the *Qur'an* but the truth of god, his evidence. Thus the image of the book/written word is symbolic of the idea of god, not necessarily a literal reading of the text. The text can be read literally, for what it conveys in terms of descriptions or

(particularly for the illiterate) as an image of writing, making visible the idea of the eternal Word, the archetype.

[197] *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 103. Roxburgh also found this association in examples of Persian poetry, namely in the verses of Shams Qays. *Prefacing the Image*, 110. "It is clear that calligraphy and depiction were not viewed as entirely distinct." *ibid*. 141.

[198] See Rachel Ward, *Islamic Metalwork*, London: British Museum, 1993).

[199] Abu'l Fazl in *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 103-4

[200] There are various correspondences in Islamic cosmogonies such as the Word of Allah *al-Kalima*/*Kun*! (the command to "be"), the *Sabiq* or messenger, and the *qalam* or pen (implying also the book/*kitab*), there are many other versions of this kind of cosmology, with varying functions and relations and often with many other kinds of hypostasis. These are examined in detail in Ian Netton, *Allah Transcendent*, 1989.

[201] See Christopher Johnson, *System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 27. The centrality of writing for Derrida's philosophy is equalled by the importance given to the calligraphic traditions of Islam, where symbolic and actual, universal and particular are meant to elide in the moment of inscription. Something of these transformational powers of writing, which we glimpse in the disputing physicians painting is expressed by Derrida: "the element of speech is air, the most spiritual and the most universal, vital medium […] But did not Feuerbach muse upon the fact that [ethereal] language forgets itself? that air is not the element in which history develops if it does not rest (itself) on earth. Heavy, serious, solid earth. The earth that is worked upon, scratched, written upon. The no less universal element in which meaning is engraved so that it will last." Jacques Derrida, Alan Bass, Trans., *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001), 9, note 23.

[202] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 41, fig. 4

[203] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 58, fig. 56

[204]The tradition can be traced back to 1579 when Bada'oni in his *Muntakhab-al Tavarikh* writes, "In this year the Emperor was anxious to unite in his person the spiritual as well as the secular headships, for he held it to be an insufferable burden to subordinate to anyone, as he had heard that the Prophet (God be gracious to him, and give him peace!), and his lawful successor, and some of the most powerful kings, as Amir Timur Cahibqiran, and Mirza Ulugh Beg-i Gurgan, and several others had themselves read the *khutbah* [the opening flourish of the sermon in the mosque], he [Akbar] resolved to do the same, apparently in order to imitate their example, but in reality to appear in public as the Mujtahid [interpreter of the holy law] of the age." See Brand and Lowry, *Fathepur Sikri*, 58.

[205] V. Gonzales, *Beauty and Islam* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2001), 40. Gonzales also suggests that this story broaches "the relationship between art and nature based on the concept of *mimesis*."

[206] The woman holding a mirror appears in Indian sculpture since at least the first century AD but in the early modern period, the image of a woman looking into a mirror or a woman painting a picture, as she does in the *Khamsa* painting, is a common one in *Ragamala* paintings. There is a late Akbar period provincial *Vilawal Ragini* example in J. Bautze, *Indian Miniature Painting c. 1590-1850* (Amsterdam, 1987), pl. 13; a *Devagiri*

Ragini, M. S. Mate and U. Ranade, *Nasik Ragamala* (Poona, 1982), pl. 23 and in such cases is usually represented as a woman looking into a mirror held by a maid; the same motif is used for *Vilawal Ragini* in a Jodhpur *Ragamala*, in H. Goetz, 'Marwar' *Marg*, 11, (3),1958, 44. The earliest example appears to be a Rajput version from the fifteenth century in Brown, 'Some Early Rajasthani Raga Paintings' *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, vol. XVI, 1948, 6. In the Laud Album (Laud 149) in the Bodleian Library, *Dhanasiri Ragini* paints a picture of her absent lover in very much the same way as the seated princess in the *Haft Paykar* illustration. See H. J. Stooke and K. Khandalavala, *The Laud Ragamala Miniatures, A Study in Indian Paintings and Music* (Oxford, 1953). For other examples of the tradition of the mirror held by a maid for her mistress, or held up for Krishna, see J. Naudou, 'Symbolisme du miroir dans L' inde' *Ars Asiatique* XIII, 1966, 59-76. The contrast between illusion and truth (with a male/female interplay also implied) is also demonstrated in Radha holding up a mirror in which is reflected the face of Krishna who stands before her, *Sotheby's Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, London, Wednesday, 19 October, 1994, Lot 167,123. These are probably the themes intended in an illustration from a Mewari Rasikapriya, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in S. A. Melikian-Chirvani, 'L'école de Shiraz et les origins de la miniature Moghole' in R. Pinder-Wilson, ed., *Paintings From Islamic Lands* (Bruno Cassirer: Oxford, 1969), pl. 90. There are numerous seventeenth-century examples of the *Vilawal Ragini* demonstrating the persistence of the image, see R. Krisnadasa in the *Chaavi Felicitation Volume*, Banares, figs. pl. 9 and pl. 41 and M. C. Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota* (Ascona, 1974), figs. 32 and 63. A significant and abundant collection of images of *Vilawal Ragini* and *Dhanasiri Ragini*, all sharing very similar compositional features with the *Khamsa* of Nizami's *Princess Painting a Self-Portrait*, may be found in the Johnson Collection in the British Library, *Vilawal*: 30.28, 30.30, 33.8, 35.15, 37.13 and 43.9 *Dhanasiri*: 30.17, 30.31, 33.14, 35.30, 37.20, 39.29 24.29 and 43.15. Such a scene also makes an appearance in the *Caurapancasika* c.1500-50 with a painting of a seated woman and a mirror, K. Khandalawala and M. Chandra, *New Documents On Indian Painting. A Reappraisal* (Bombay, 1969), pl. 20, 81. The fact that kneeling maids also hold round mirrors up to their mistresses in a *Mahapurana* of 1540 Khandalawala and Chandra, *New Documents*, cover illustration, and several times in a *Laur Chanda*, 1550 in the Chandigarh Museum, reproduced in S. Andhare, *Chronology of Mewar paintings* (Delhi : Agam Kala Prakashan, 1987), pl. 21 point to an earlier, provincial source for the similar image in the *Khamsa*. Also noticeable here is the fact that the *Khamsa* illustration shares a common feature of earlier Indian painting, namely a compositional scheme that consists of series of horizontal registers, in this case five in all, from the background garden at the top, to the central action and thence to vignettes of attendants of court. Placed just above this may be seen details of an architectural frieze representing figures, which is in turn placed above more people at the bottom of the picture, outside the castle walls.

[207] In the European tradition, several paintings of women looking into to mirrors are remarkably similar in nature, *Vanity* by Memling being a case in point and various other pictures of Susannah and the Elders. See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 50-51. Berger points out that the mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman where the writing

around the image expressly states that the representation is one of Vanity personified. "The moralising however, was mostly hypocritical" as Berger writes, for it allows for a certain amount of prurience while moralising at the same time. Yet also the device of the mirror "was to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight." Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 50-51. These points are certainly worth considering in numerous Indian contexts.

[208] Published by L. Y Leach in *Paintings from India: The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art vol. 8*, London, 1998), fig. 22.

[209] In the Anthology of Iskandar Sultan, 1410-1411, publ. in Eleanor Sims et. al., *Peerless Images*, 317, where several examples of this topos are published, 317-320.

[210] Painted in Mandu, depicting Jahangir on a golden throne with a globe in his hand. 'Jahangir' means world ruler, conqueror or 'controller', literally, 'he who makes the world go around/spin/fall'. Lot 85, Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, (London, 18 October, 1995).

[211] Lot 85, Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, (London, 18 October, 1995, 74.

[212] A painting of this scene from a Timurid *Khamsa* of Nizami is the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 13.228.3, f. 332r Eleanor Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images, Persian Painting*, 316. No version is extant from the Mughal period; however, several pages are missing from the *Khamsa* of Nizami in the British Library.

[213] An undated loose folio at the Indian Museum, Calcutta J. Strzygowski, H. Glück, S. Kramrisch and E. Wellesz, *Asiatische Miniaturenmalerei* (Klagenfurt, 1933), Abb. 257. The Mughals were very fond of this subject obviously relating to it as a fundamental mythic structure. In the British Library *Khamsa*, this subject is illustrated again, see Brend, The Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, figs. 27 and 28. Another illustration appears in folio 18b in the Sackler Art Gallery *Khamsa* of Nizami which has 64 Mughal style miniatures, added to a corpus of earlier Iranian illustrations. See G. S. Lowry, *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection* (Washington D.C., 1988), no. 237. There is also a Bodleian Library illustration, Elliot 194 (Ethé 594), *Iskandar looks into a mirror*, folio 317a. The Ms. is dated 1480, Herat, but was evidently repainted in India. The same manuscript has fragments of Iskandar and his mirror on folio 44. In the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi there is an illustration, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York of an enchanted mirror set up high on a tower that gives Alexander a magical omniscience to see pirates within a range of sixty leagues, and has a boat painted to appear as a reflection, this is however, so tiny, it may only be seen with a magnifying glass. For the illustration Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot*, 84 and pl. XX. The Persians too, were interested in the mythical associations attached to stories of mirrors. See a folio from an *Iskandar-nama*, datable to around 1400 from Timurid Shiraz, entitled *Rassam Making Iskandar's Mirror*. N. Titley, *Miniatures From Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 136. Another version is in a *Khamsa* manuscript from Shiraz, dated 1516. Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Highly Important Manuscripts and Miniatures, The Property of the Hagop Kevorkian Fund*, December 7, 1970, Lot 191.

[214] My adaptation of H. Wilberforce Clarke, *The Sikandar Nama, e bara or Book of Alexander the Great (...)*, (London, 1881), 250-1.

[215] Nizami writes "The breast is a mirror of essence; the Stream of Life is found within your heart." C. E. Wilson, *Commentary to the Haft Peykar* (London, 1924), 21

[216] C. E. Wilson, *Commentary to the Haft Peykar* (London, 1924), explains that his translation of "mirror of intellect" here is problematic as the word used is "*jauhar-ayina*" meaning also, "mirror of nature" or "mirror of essence", C. E. Wilson, *ibid*., 39. Mirror of essence or nature, more closely follows the verse in the *Makhzan al-Asrar* where Nizami writes of Adam, that he is the "mirror of the sons of the dust."

[217] G. H. Darab, Tr., *The Makhhzanol Asrar*, 152.

[218]Adapted from *The Makhhzanol Asrar*, 218.

[219] See Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 62, folio 221b. A similar story occurs in the same *Tuhfat al-ahrar* of Yusuf being presented with a mirror by a traveller from Canaan, of which there is an illustration in a Bukhara manuscript owned by the Mughal emperors. See Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, fig. 8. In another example from Jami's *Tuhfat al-Ahrar*, Yusuf peers into a mirror and his reflection is full frontal and appears to look out at the viewer. See Sotheby's sale catalogue, *Islamic Art Indian Miniatures, Rugs and Carpets*, April 28, 1993, Lot 148, mid-sixteenth century, Bukhara.

[220] Tom Spanbauer, *The Man Who Fell in Love With The Moon* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 316.

[221] Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot*, pl. XX.

[222] Quoted in Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 95.

[223]This has also been suggested by Robert Skelton in his analysis of the same picture in 'Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting', in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Soucek, 181.

[224] Published by Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius eds. *Islam Art and Architecture* (Könemann: Cologne, 2000), p . 411.

[225] Koch and Beach, *Padshah-nama*, pl. 16.

[226] Koch and Beach, *Padshah-nama*, 90.

[227] "We […] feel a "vague awe" at the creative skills of the artist; we fear the power of the image he makes and their uncanny abilities both to elevate us and to disturb us. They put us in touch with truths about ourselves in a way that can only be described as magical, or they deceive us as if by witchcraft." Freedberg, *Power of the Image*, 77

[228] See G. Minissale, 'Demarcating Conceptual Space in Mughal Art', *Oriental Art*, Vol. XLVI, No. 5 (2000). It is possible that the motif of the severed heads in Mughal art may well have had its origins in the *kirtimukha*, the face of glory, which wards off evil from the top of sculptural niches in Medieval Hindu sculpture.

[229] In great contrast to the veneration of Christian images by the Mughals, there were those at court, such as Bada'oni, who kept a private diary of events at Akbar's court and who were fiercely critical of the emperor's remarkable tolerance for Christianity and distrusted figural imagery in painting, it is perhaps they who are referred to in the sentence voiced by Akbar and penned by Abu'l Fazl: "Bigoted followers of the letter of the law are hostile to the art of painting." *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 114.

[230] Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 7.

[231]See Victor Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion 1995), 27.

[232] J. S. Meisami, *The Haft Peykar, A Medieval Persian Romance*, 164.
[233] M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards, *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 25.
[234]Eleazar Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 34.
[235] Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 159.
[236] John Seyller identified a practice of "reducing specific, textually described events to types of scenes with which artists are most familiar—audiences, battles, conversations and the like." Seyller, *Workshop and patron in Mughal India.*, 84. And in the *Padshah-nama*, types of painting reducible to a basic composition were continually recycled. Koch and Beach, *Padshah-nama*, p 18.
[237] Adel T. Adamova, 'The Hermitage Manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa* Dated 835/1431' in E. Grube and E. Sims (eds.) *Islamic Art* V, who describes the presence of miniatures whose compositions repeat earlier pictures as an aesthetic norm that was "entirely deliberate: it is a conscious display of an artist's talents in being able to reproduce the work of a master-predecessor and to pay homage to that earlier tradition, while at the same time, demonstrating his mastery of workshop skills by subtly altering the older composition in accordance with the styles of his own day." 77-78.
[238] In literature as in painting for the Timurids, as well as the Mughals, "Recognition was one of the necessary elements of aesthetic perception, the specifics of which, as we see, were based on an extraordinarily capacious literary memory." Z. N. Vorozhykina, *Isfahanskaya shkola poetov Ii literaturnaya zhizn Irana v predmongolskoye vremia. XII-nachalo XIII veka* (Moscow, 1984), 199, quoted and translated in Adel T. Adamova, 'The Hermitage Manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa* Dated 835/1431' in E. Grube and E. Sims (eds.) *Islamic Art* V, 78.
[239] This has formed the basis of a recent exhibition at the British Museum, *Art and Memory in World Cultures*, 2003. The exhibition catalogue explains new critical theories about conceptualising many different cultures which has much in common with the approach taken here: "methods of memory-recall may be redrawn as a comparison between 'repetition', where the thing remembered becomes the subject of formulaic recitation or visualisation, and 'duration', where it is always potentially present as a stimulus to recollection. Clearly two overlapping conceptions of time are at work here, one cyclical the other linear." John Mack, *Art and Memory in World Cultures*, *The Museum of the Mind* (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 32-33.
[240] John Mack, *Art and Memory in World Cultures*, 33.
[241] Bernard Lewis eloquently remarks on this 'presentist' fallacy in Islamic studies: "[…] when modern man ceased to accord first place to religion in his own concerns, he also ceased to believe that other men, in other times, could ever truly have done so, and so he began to re-examine the great religious movements of the past in search of interests and motives acceptable to modern minds." Bernard. Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1967), 136.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING REFLEXIVITY

4.1 *St. Luke painting the Virgin*

Mughal painting is important in preserving cultural memory, giving shape to the imagination and engaging aesthetic experience. Part of this aesthetic experience is reflection on the nature and function of art, and Mughal painting in many cases may be seen as a stimulus for thought about the nature of representation. Chapter Four investigates a number of paintings that appear to step outside the usual bounds of the 'verist' tradition of representation (that paintings should simply illustrate a story or copy a part of the visible world) and they do this by depicting and interpreting acts of visual experience. They show either a viewer studying or holding a painting, or a painter in the act of painting, or they show paintings in the background of a scene. This kind of illustration depicts the art of painting as a process of labour or production, which "thematises the "doer," the "doing," and the result of the "doing" seen as an indisociable triad."[1] These paintings stimulate complex perceptions about projected fictions. They occur often enough to suggest that the Mughal viewer was interested in the convoluted artifice of paintings about painting. These are 'reflexive' paintings, that is, they refer to themselves at the same time as they thematise the reception, production or use of images. It is possible to describe them as instances of visual rhetoric, or to continue with a linguistic metaphor, that they speak a kind of meta-language, and indeed, they have been called "meta-painting" in European examples of the same phenomenon.[2] Chapter Four begins with a study of the similarities and differences between the reflexive painting of Mughal and European visual traditions in order to establish how and why this art comes about. I then examine how these kinds of reflexive processes function, tracing a history of this visual and intellectual phenomenon in Mughal painting.

A common thread of previous chapters has been to show how inadequate and inappropriate are characterisations of Mughal miniatures as windows on the world, carbon copies of life and action by showing other intellectual operations

at work in connection with this visual tradition. Reflexivity in art adds considerably to this theme, for instead of constructing a beguiling art of illusionist charm or a scientific recording of nature, reflexive paintings foreground the specific means of artistic production in Mughal painting, and in some instances, they even go so far as to parody the European notion of the window on reality. This should not be surprising in an art that I have shown has a character consistently independent of, and in some cases, antagonistic to European illusionism. Reflexivity points further to that anti-illusionist aesthetic. This is a common view of the properties of reflexivity, that it interrogates, or demystifies the devices used to create fiction and the suspension of disbelief.[3]

Depictions of the artist in the act of painting and the viewer in the act of viewing show us the reality of the cultural, intellectual and social practices surrounding visual experience in the Mughal period. Yet they also allowed the Mughals to reflect on how they saw and understood the visible world. As such, reflexive paintings are a significant landmark in conceptual development. They are evidence that the art of painting evolved as a valued participant in the intellectual and spiritual life of the Mughals.[4]

To begin with, reflexivity in painting is not a culturally isolated phenomenon. It occurs in Mughal painting and in cultures worldwide. One example from the early modern period in Europe is an altarpiece of *St. Luke Painting the Virgin Mary* by an unknown German artist in 1487. **Fig. 4.1**[5] This altarpiece comprises a series of views: there is a view into the chamber on the left where the Virgin Mary sits (and a view outside onto a landscape); then there is a view of the picture of the Virgin and Child painted by the saint, and a view out of a window onto an idyllic landscape on his side. Another European example of reflexivity is an engraving by the Flemish artist Jan Wierix (c. 1549-1615) of *Apelles and Campaspe*,[6] which tells of the story of Alexander the Great's involvement with art. Apelles is his court painter to whom he gives his concubine, Campaspe. The engraving by Wierix emphasises the part of the story where Alexander is supposed to judge the physical beauty of Campaspe against her image painted by Apelles. As this is a tale showing Alexander's ability to judge art and external appearances it bears some similarities, at least in its essentials with Nizami's text where Iskandar judges a competition between the artists of Chin and Rum. In each case, the viewer is being asked to compare the truth with a representation of it. Like the artist or Alexander/Iskandar portrayed in these paintings, the viewer must also use his or her judgement in perceiving the truth from the illusion of the truth, and included in this assessment is the fictive painting portrayed in the space of the actual, physical painting, one parodying the other.

In later Dutch art, Vermeer's *Artist in his Studio* 1666-7[7] shows the making of another picture inside a picture, featuring the muse of history, Clio, an

allegorical figure used to show the importance of painting in history. Other depictions are the map of the wall with a number of other, smaller paintings around it. Perhaps the most famous painting of this kind is the Spanish painting of *Las Meninas*, 1656 by Velázquez who painted a picture of himself painting a picture.[8] There are also many views of pictures in the background of this painting, and of course, the celebrated network of gazes offered by the mirror and so many other figures has rightly made this picture the apotheosis of reflexivity, mainly because it thematises looking, different viewing points and positions and contrasting levels of representation. As in all reflexive pictures, the beholder is shown several views of reality brought to mind by the co-existence of more than one scene. The artist paints a mirror reflection at the back of the room, which may reflect the canvas he is painting, or the king and queen in the spectator's viewing position. This kind of obvious reflexivity can be interpictorial, as Goya painted a portrait of himself painting the portraits of the family of Charles IV in 1800 in the Prado, Madrid, in clear reference to Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. One of the most well known aspects of Velázquez's painting shows the art of painting and the painter in the company of kings. The cross of Santiago, which Velázquez wears and the company he keeps shows his own rise in status, and as in the Vermeer example, the art of painting is being raised socially and intellectually to hitherto unknown levels. Reflexive painting congratulates itself on its complex conundrums.

A rise in the status of the art of painting to higher levels of cognitive complexity is similarly responsible for paintings about painting in the Mughal context. Certainly in the Jahangir period, the emperor was often painted in the company of paintings and painters and in one painting he is shown inspecting a image, with artists around him.[9] The colophon of the *Khamsa*, added later in the Jahangir period **Fig. 2.10** is a clear endorsement of both the *Khamsa*'s paintings and the painting of the Jahangir period as heirs to a revered tradition of painting. It is a painting 'about' the *Khamsa* itself, as well as the art of painting, and clearly signifies Jahangir's inheritance of the book. Dawlat, the artist, added his own painting to the *Khamsa* cycle and thus claimed for the painting of his time a place in the legendary *nighar-i khane* (or picture gallery), claimed implicitly by the Akbar period artists of the *Khamsa* as many of the paintings here refer to the art of painting. The reflexive mechanism here allows the artist to put the art of painting near to the level enjoyed by calligraphy. Because it is about the art of painting and calligraphy and is a bridge between the Akbar and Jahangir periods, the colophon is a deliberate and conscious acknowledgment of the theme of painting as treated by the other reflexive pictures in the *Khamsa*. It also brings the book into the realm of representation in a reflexive manner[10]and uses the lineage of painting as an articulation of imperial tradition.

This painting bears an interpictorial relation to the tradition of author portraits found in the frontispieces or colophons of manuscripts as far back as the thirteenth century and indebted to antiquity.[11] The colophon described above in the *Khamsa* may be a revival of an age-old tradition but it is a reflexive tradition revived by Jahangir with purpose and wit. In one painting in the Keir Collection *Khamsa* of Nizami and another in the Royal Asiatic Society *Gulistan* of Sa'di, artists or calligraphers and their art feature centrally. A similar painting, which thematises the site and methods of production of the arts of the book, may be seen in a folio from the *Akhlaq i-Nasiri* manuscript of c.1590, featuring artists and scribes of the studio-scriptorium at work.[12] In the Jahangir Album in the State Library in Berlin, another miniature continues the theme. It shows an artist painting a hunting scene, another artist paints a picture of the Virgin Mary, and he sits in front of a window view that is made to look like another picture. **Fig. 4.2**. There is also a man at the top of the picture who is shown offering up a picture to someone outside of the frame to the left. This is a complex painting that offers the viewer several different viewing choices in order to paint the theme of visual experience and image production. It offers several different ways of seeing, understanding, and visualising. And in this sense, it differs little from the themes broached years later and so far away in Europe by Velázquez.

4.2 *Mughal painting studio*

In European culture it has been suggested that reflexive painting is indebted to the development of the artist's self-portrait.[13] In the Gulshan Album in Tehran, several artists are painted in the margins of a page of calligraphy, which can be read both as recognition of their rise in status and their marginalisation, as it reaffirms their peripheral nature, the artist is on the margins of reading, excluded from the power of the visual centre.[14] In the Jahangir period reflexivity developed out of the Emperor's personal relationship to painting and patronising art, showing him taking part in the creative process of picture making must have been a form of intellectual flattery. The many different occasions where we know the Emperor to have ordered a particular painting of flowers, a zebra, or his dying attendant Inayat Khan, shows the Emperor to have valued painting not so much as part of his "visual gluttony"[15] but as a way of recording his own 'way of seeing' the world and its visible objects.

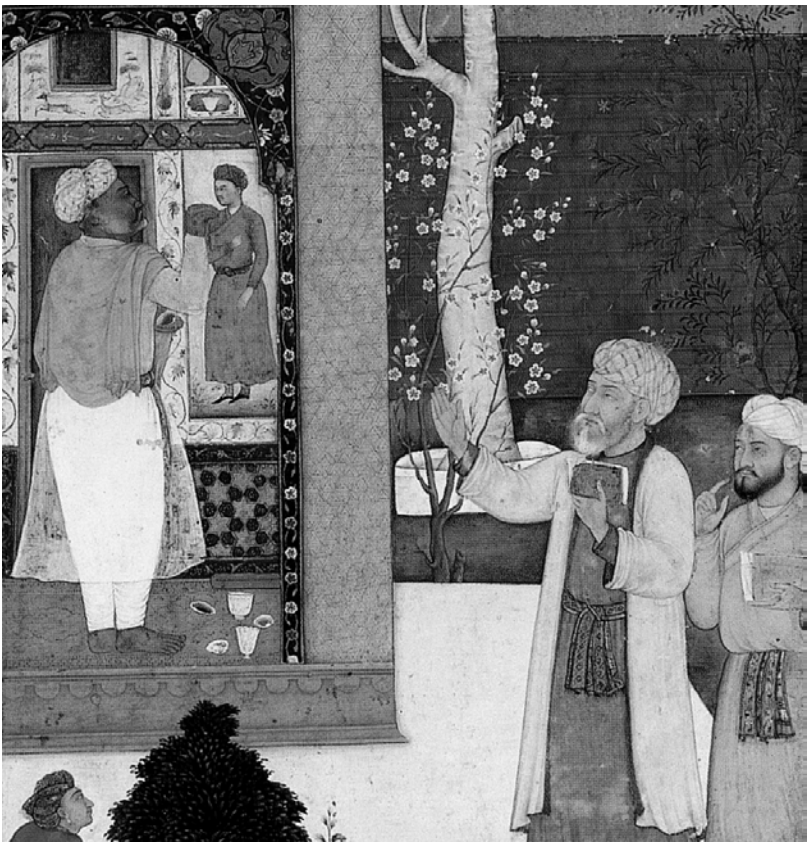
In the Gulshan Album in Tehran, portraits of artists in the margins surrounding a written page point to the presence or 'being' of the artist outside the work. It is remarkable that the dynamics between images in the margin and the images they enclose have never been analysed in Mughal art in any systematic way; and yet the 'image on the edge' as well as the various other kinds of framing devices are "obviously part of the pictorial order."[16] The paintings of artists painting in the margin in the Gulshan Album surround a specimen of calligraphy and thus their images here cannot easily be explained as a way to append their identities to this particular page. Yet, the manuscript in which this page was bound originally remains unidentified and it is possible that it included several illustrations by these artists. Their image in such circumstances still point to the notion of the artist placed 'outside' the centre. The artists are placed alongside the work (or at the end of the book, in or near the colophon) moving from the periphery of the viewer's vision and awareness in order to come into play with the centre, or the main text.

Because mental compartments usually underpin spatial arrangements, more can be made of the perceptions involved in the play between margin and centre. Naturally, we read this contrast in terms of outside or inside the frame. The pictures in the margin form an illustrated frame delimiting the content within. One of the universally acknowledged functions of the frame is to demarcate the world outside, which is to be 'left behind' when 'entering' the picture frame; the frame signals entrance. The marginal portraits of artists, or beggars, Sufis or angels seen in abundance in the Shah Jahan period change the status of the margin as strictly, narratively outside the work, as the gaze of a depicted figure sometimes connects from the centre painting to another figure in the margin space, or vice versa. The margin figures seem to be a step nearer the world outside of the book, and they either engage with 'the painting' or look through the margin lines to the scene 'inside.' The image on the edge mimics the

viewer's 'outsideness' creating a liminal zone, one which demarcates two kinds of viewing: the gaze of depicted figures in the margin (a fictionalised viewing of 'reality' or envisioning by fictional viewers) and the gaze of the viewer mimicked by figures in the margin. The margin is outside, but what lies outside the outside? Read from the outside, the Gulshan Album margin painting is a liminal space signifying 'art' or artistry, or a suspended existence, wedged between reality and fiction yet expelled from of each of these zones; it creates a buffer zone between image and non-image.[17]

Reflexive paintings in the Jahangir period reveal a desire to describe and define the attributes of the art of painting and they are concerned to show it as a highly valued activity. This is also evident in the *Submission of the Maharana of Mewar to Prince Khurram.*[18] A crowd is depicted gathering to witness the important event of the Maharana's capitulation to the Mughal Empire before the Emperor Jahangir's favourite son, Prince Khurram, the future Shah Jahan. To the right of the picture, an artist may be seen painting a picture of the event unfolding before him. Here, Nanha the artist is depicted as a witness, as well as the recorder of the event, he has included himself *inside* the historical event, perhaps because he was actually there, more certainly because it creates an interesting perceptual richness that 'doubles' the painting with a view of its own genesis. One is reminded of Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1412, where the artist turned himself into a witness of an important event by showing his own image in the reflection of the mirror at the back of the room. The picture Nanha is painting 'inside' the *Submission of the Maharana of Mewar to Prince Khurram* is the painting itself that we are viewing. It turns it both inside-out (the painting he paints in his hand) and outside-in. The picture has two appearances: it is an historical event, and yet it is also an act of painterly creation evidence of the hand and the mind of the artist. It is impossible to divorce the historical event from the artistic. They appear to engender each other as one of the very themes of the painting.

In another painting, two scholars with books in their hands appear to discuss the activity of an artist painting a figure on a wall, **Fig. 4.3**. He is situated inside a pavilion framed by an arch, which pictorialises his activity and frames it as a discussion for the scholars. It also plays with several deictic projections: as the artist views his painting, they view him and his activity as they would a painting and makes us conscious of doing the same thing. The painting focuses on the subject of looking at the artist looking and painting. The image he creates on the wall also looks back at him, at his creator; it is a shifting ontology of presence. The scholars appear to discuss the nature of art, and with their learned books and gestures seem to be evaluating more than just an aesthetic point. They also mimic us, the real spectators of the painting and thematise our active observation.



4.3 *Scholars discuss the art of painting*

The painting is self-reflective because it thematises the production of painting and its reception. The many depictions of the gaze here is also the outward sign of a consciousness of different ways of seeing.

Other images that depict the act of painting point up issues of perception. The picture of Mani that appears in the *Khamsa* **Fig. 3.6** is the result not only ofa long Persian tradition associating this figure with the perfection of painting and depicted in the poetry of Firdausi and Nizami as a figure from an earlier spiritual revelation, now superseded by Islam, but Mani is also a standard for the Mughals' own art of painting, he is a figure who symbolises the history of painting casting the Mughal art at its apex. In the *Shah-nama*, Mani appears as a

Chinese painter who appears before Shapur. Here, he proclaims himself to be "a prophet through painting" or through his *arzhang*, which is variously interpreted as his sacred writings, illustrated with drawings.[19]Mani's choice of subject is significant. In many Islamic cultures dogs, considered akin to boars or pigs. The painting of the dead dog, with its innards in full view is thus doubly repellent. The image of the dead dog warns others to stay away from the well and thus his picture has more power of deception than the Chinese painting. The image of the dog is also a reference to another story by Nizami in which Issa (Jesus) takes pity on the carcass of a dog and refers to it as "a picture whose teeth are whiter than pearls." Pearls are metaphors for beautiful words of poetry and so Issa is saying that through the picture or the appearance of death and ugliness, beauty and meaning may be found. The dead dog is an image that speaks a thousand words about the illusion of worldly appearances and Mani's painting is an illusion of an illusion. The world and even death (and Mani's religion) are ugly illusions compared to life in paradise signified by the water of life (Islam) which lies under the cover of the well, which will wash away the world's sins (idols, paintings and false worship).

Found in the *Tuti-nama* is another story familiar to the Mughals about a dog that drowns in a well, deceived by his own reflection on the surface of the water. Mani's picture of a dead dog is supposed to be a painting over a painting and Mani's attempt is so convincing and realistic that he becomes the unrivalled champion of painting in Persian art. But in all the instances mentioned here, the viewer is encouraged by the reflexive mechanism to go beyond the senses and mere optical observation of the image to the mental image so as to understand that the visible image questions itself, revealing the illusions of the world (and by implication, so should the Mughal painting of the image). The illustration of the story of Mani is also a tacit claim by the Mughal artist, Sur Gujrarati, using recognisable and appropriate established language and imagery, that he is heir to the great tradition of painting exemplified by Mani; his painting supersedes the great achievements of the legendary past. This kind of reflexive painting is motivated by the desire to show the archetypal act of painting with the literal scenario, so the one reflects the other. The lineage of art shown here expresses human history as a series of revelations, tearing away layers of illusion.

Similarly complex is a scene, possibly from the Mughal version of the 'Life of Christ', the *Mi'rat al-Quds*, painted early in the seventeenth century, **Fig. 4.4**.[20] Christ is portrayed giving a sermon, and in front of him an artist can be seen painting his image. Intertextual references abound. Christ is traditionally known to breathe life into clay birds that he had fashioned. Artists in some collections of the sayings of the Prophet (*hadith* traditions) are ordered to give

4.4 *An artist paints Christ teaching*

an account of their life in heaven and are challenged to breathe life into the pictorial creations they have been responsible for. The painting thus shows Christ as an image (a double image, in fact), which may or may not be brought to life by the artist. This may well refer to Christ's Resurrection, something accepted by Christians but denied by Muslims. But also, the image of Christ, which we see on the painter's page, provides another level of representation; it is another copy or image pointing up the fiction of the Christ figure from where the image is taken. The fiction/reality paradox, further emphasised by the architectural frame that pictorialises the 'real' Christ, obviously has a resonance particularly for the figure of Christ, believed by Christians to be divine but considered by Muslims to be a prophet among others. Beyond the requirements of the text, the artist uses the well-known stereotype of Europeans who are considered sinful because they paint graven images.

4.5 *Yusuf and Zulaykha*

The other complexity behind this innovation beyond the requirements of the text is that in the Christian's own terms, Christ is divine and yet one of the commandments forbids the depiction of god. This must have been confusing to the Mughals, and the Jesuits were tried to explain this very point to them on several occasions. In the painting of the artist depicting Christ preaching, the idea of the imitation, or the copy is central to our understanding of the image as a whole. For Christians, Christ and his life must be 'imitated'; the Mughals could be showing a very literal version of this complex idea.[21] The Muslim equivalent of the internal mental image was the *hilya* or ornament, a devotional aid.[22] The Naqshbandi order, widely established in Mughal India, practised a well-known spiritual exercise known as the *tasawwur-i shaykh*, where it was incumbent on the initiate to concentrate on the image of the leader of the order in an eidetic (mental imaging) sense.[23] The Mughal artist thematises the *imitation* of Christ and an imitation of an artist painting Christ, both of which are images of thought rather than an attempt to imitate nature or reality as it happened. The question of authenticity arises from levels of reality, where Christ in the arch is the original compared to the artist's a copy; but one can also not escape the conclusion that what is being painted is a copy of a copy. As such, it echoes the same Neo-Platonic logic behind the series of paintings in the Western tradition of St. Veronica, presenting the "real" image of Christ on the cloth, which is transposed into the different medium of painting. In nearly all these reflexive paintings, the most consistent principle of representation questions the window on reality and focuses on the illusionary quality of painting, contrasting it with "real" viewers, artists or sitters who, in fact, are also shown to be illusory.

Embedded Images

Even when paintings do not explicitly take up the theme of painting images and their effects, they enclose images that masquerade as background or incidental details, such as paintings or even mirrors on walls, half hidden by curtains or held by people who appear to question them. Sculptures seen in these images, whether they are talismans or idols (they reference each other in many Islamic cultures), also function as an embedded image, an image or representation broaching the subject of visuality and fiction lodged inside the pictorial space, questioning the image's (or idol's) veracity. Because in many instances the 'embedded image' deals with the subject of viewing (whether this is from a purely observational process, or one premised on the imagination or memory, or as idolatry) these embedded images work on the premise of reflexivity, representing the contrast of visual reality and visual illusion, making us aware of the phenomenology of eidetic formation, even

while we observe. There is some evidence that the Mughals may have been encouraged to use embedded images in earlier Persian art. A frequently occurring embedded image may be seen in illustrations of the story of Iskandar and Nushabeh, or episodes in the love story of Khusrau and Shirin[24] and also part of a tradition of representation of a third figure in the same story, the master builder, Farhad, who had been commissioned by Shirin to clear a channel through a mountain of rock and who is often receiving a visit from Shirin. In these paintings, there is often a sculpted relief, carved onto a rock face in the background showing the two of them together, and other representations. These embedded images not only are a kind of visual recapitulation of the story, but they also alert us to an underlying possible reality hidden from our eyes, that Farhad and possibly Shirin have hidden desires for each other. The enclosure contains a hidden narrative and is thus very much like all embedded images, a visual narrative secreted within another visual narrative, like a subtext. It is an efficient visual way of intimating other underlying facets or possibilities of the story. The embedded images show us Farhad's undying love Shirin, and the triangle of relationships formed by the other main character, Khusrau who is also her suitor. A similar illustration from another Persian poem, this time by Rumi that traditionally features embedded images is Yusuf (Joseph) and Zulaykha (Potiphar's wife).[25] A Mughal version dated 1606-7 shows the meeting of Yusuf with Zulaykha as an old woman[26] **Fig. 4.5**. Embedded paintings in the background of the scene remind us of the earlier part of the story where paintings on walls are featured as part of Zulaykha's attempt to seduce Yusuf, which the saint resists. This is the usual way of rendering the scene in many Islamic cultures, even today. The embedded images assist memory of an earlier part of the text but they also articulate the 'hidden' past shared by the two characters. This past consists of the confusion by Zulaykha of the external and internal qualities of Yusuf (in Islamic traditions, Yusuf is a prophet, and this identity she cannot see because she worships idols). She falls for his physical beauty, while Yusuf resists hers. The embedded painting depicting them united together is an externalisation of the longing in her heart, and it is an image lodged in the heart of the painting, questioning it. It allows the viewer to read the painting and the embedded painting (and paintings in general) as metaphors of external appearances or representations that must be distinguished from the truth. Yusuf has already learnt this lesson by resisting Zulaykha, accepting only her spiritual devotion, which he now rewards by rejuvenating her. In the foreground, a still youthful Yusuf and a much older Zulaykha encounter each other 'in the present'. Because of her enduring love for Yusuf, now turned into a love beyond physical attraction, he forgives her for trying to seduce him in the past and for her false statements against him, accusing him of indecent behaviour.

4.6 *A woman holds up a picture of Christ*

An added complexity appears in a subsidiary scene in the mid-ground, showing a young woman with attendants which could either be a depiction of the young Zulaykha of the past, or the old Zulaykha, who has her youth restored to her by Yusuf. The artist has framed the mid-ground of the young woman in an arch, another framing device, questioning the verity of the representation. Three spatial (read also, mental) compartments are created to show three different time frames or three different scenes, which may indicate three different versions of reality: Zulaykha's imagination or hidden desire, events in the past shared by the two characters and dealt with in the story, and a vision of their future reconciliation on a spiritual plane (although this may also refer to the past and therefore the painting is decidedly cyclical). The embedded paintings provide for the co-existence of narrative strands (one thinks of timelines or dimensions, some of which are aborted, but nevertheless co-exist) providing a multiplicity of interpretations on the nature of visual reality. The nested image subverts the hegemony of the literal meaning of the scene, supplementing it with other possible nuances and subtleties of meaning about hidden feelings and desires, the nature of devotion, love, beauty, representation and the truth. The hidden esoteric truth (*batin*) represented by Yusuf is contrasted with misleading external appearances (*zahir*) represented by Zulaykha. Not only is she unable to see beyond sensuous experience but she is also an idol worshipper (likened to a kind of worship of external forms) unable to envision the truth of the invisible nature of the divine. These themes that are central to our understanding of the story are articulated most effectively in a visual sense: the illusory paintings on the wall depict what is naked to the eye, an immanence of sensuous experience, while the foreground, with Yusuf's burning halo, points to a transcendence, to a revealed truth. The embedded paintings on the wall point to another place, time, and narrative and with the foreground and mid-ground create a multiplicity of abstract meanings and values. Aesthetic response becomes a synthesis of sense

perception and mental or metaphysical abstraction. It is able to show us the eidetic formation of memory, visionary idealism and the power of art. The painting is an illustration of the story and an image of thought.

In addition to their knowledge of these Persian precedents, the Mughals might further have been encouraged to paint their own embedded images by the example of European engravings depicting a similar reflexive visuality. A Mughal drawing in the border of the Gulshan Album now in Tehran is a drawing based on a European engraving of a European woman holding up a picture of Christ for worship **Fig. 4.6**, most probably after a St. Veronica of which there are several versions.[27] This can be likened to another Mughal painting, this time a picture within a picture, which portrays a Mughal lady reverently holding up a picture of the Emperor Jahangir[28] **Fig. 4.7**. This painting is evidence of how the Mughals used Christian representations for their own ends transposing them while at the same time referring to them in order to utilise the allure of the original. This painting hints at the cult power of the emperor's image. It is part of a group of paintings where figures hold up images in similar ways. A famous painting of Jahangir holding up a painting of his father, Akbar, now in the Musée Guimet is one of the better examples. The embedded painting thematises Jahangir's lineage but also allows Jahangir to appear to pay homage to the memory of his predecessor and to lay claim to the dominions of the Mughal Empire inherited from his father and signified by the globe Akbar appears to hold in his hand. As if in some silent communication with his father, the Emperor himself is shown as the admirer of a picture, thus enriching the image of his own kingship with a painting, showing him to be a viewer and inspector of pictures; it also suggests that by some process of visual contemplation, or by the shared gaze, a manifestation of the patrilineal character of the Mughal dynasty could be communicated or reiterated to other viewers. But also, there is the idea of immediacy: Jahangir is 'more real' than

4.7. *Lady with a picture of Jahangir*

the picture he holds up, another example of contrasting fiction with reality. The fascination with this image lies precisely in the play between one depiction of reality supplanting or superseding another. And yet, there may also be something of the *momento mori* in this, as Jahangir holds his picture of his dead father as any viewer could hold the painting in question, and if this had been given to his son Shah Jahan, how better to visually conceptualise the waxing and waning of succession? The pictures reproduced here of women holding up pictures thematise thinking about images as memorials, denoting the presence of an absence (Jahangir to be remembered), but also, demonstrating the power of visuality and the respect that we should have for the image, as she respects and reveres the image she holds. The image within the image not only succinctly conveys to us lineage of emperors but also depicts attitudes to visual experience passed to us through time: that images can convey enduring thoughts.

Other embedded images show Jahangir in a formal court ceremony with two large paintings in the background.[29] On the right a European lady and gentleman in a landscape and on the left, the angel and Tobias (more probably a Jibrail and the fish), a tale of sacrifice for the sake of god. There are also numerous paintings of Jahangir or Shah Jahan shown on the imperial *jharoka* or balcony in the background of which there are paintings of the Virgin Mary. Invariably in the history of Mughal art these paintings have been considered as examples of an artist's eye for detail, accurately recording the Mughal habit of pinning Christian images to the back wall of the ceremonial balcony, the place of display of the Mughal emperors. Yet, in the case of the painting of Akbar on the balcony wall, in a painting in the *Padshah-nama* showing Jahangir bestowing a jewelled brooch to his son, the use of this embedded image to create a message about the continuity of Mughal kingship is perhaps as much to do with recording appearances as intellectual, visual play. Although the role that these images may have played in the presentation of the Mughal kingship to royal subjects has been discussed,[30] the process of creating a *pictorial* representation of this image-making may also be seen in the light of reflexive thought processes. Pictorialising a visual display of paintings is in itself a reflexive process: it shows that the embedded image *in situ* on the balcony wall was a meaningful part of the overall display of kingship; the painting of this display is a re-presentation of this presentation; it offers up the carefully constructed display and creates a more nuanced visual experience. The process of painting the embedded images we see in royal contexts such as these does not simply record things exactly as they were but as they should be in ideal contexts of image presentation. They reiterate the presentation of the image, some of the power of the revered images on the balcony should accrue to the very painting which depicts them. The process of choosing to paint these embedded images makes the art of painting pivotal in the very rituals of the imperial court

designed to enhance its fundamental message of power. But as embedded images they possess the power to contain alternative readings about the nature and power of visual experience.

The Christian images were above all paradoxical: the cultural memory of the Virgin Mary and Christ furnished powerful auras; as magic charms, and as references to holiness, qualities which the Mughal emperors sought to subsume into their own self-image, an image which could not be augmented by the image of Muhammad which might have provoked widespread disquiet (and was probably unthinkable to the rulers themselves). They could write his name and the names of god but Christian images allowed them to co-opt qualities of the sacred or semi-sacred visually through the medium of painting. Christ and the Virgin Mary were powerful, universally revered images in the absence of a painting of Muhammad or god. Not only do they show the Mughal emperors attempting to share in the reverence given to these images by their close association with them, they also showed the co-option of Christian images in the service of the Islamic rule of the Mughal emperors, their use for this purpose both added to the imperial aura and denuded them of their independent Christian identities. The Mughals claimed the Virgin Mary (Miriam) and Christ (Issa) for themselves. The pictorialisation of this is yet another process of Mughal cultural imperialism. More than this, the painting of the Christian paintings on the *jharoka* balcony has a reflexive nature: it is both an act of image appropriation while at the same time, it thematises that appropriation. These paintings of the emperors embedded with portraits of the Virgin Mary and Christ function as part of the message of power, and at the same time it reduces the power attributed to the semi-sacred Christian-Muslim images to that of collectible items, reflecting the *jouissance* of the emperors, fitting neatly into the tiny boxed areas of the balcony ceiling like a talisman or an embedded superstition. This use has parallels with the recording of collections of paintings in contemporary Europe by Teniers, sometimes seen as part of cabinets of curiosities, which reflect the pride of the collector and show that the collections are *possessed*, they are, in fact, appendages of the intellect of the collector. They are diminutive images within images yet, as in many of the paintings I have discussed here, their power also lies in the contrast of fiction with reality, sometimes suggesting a simple relationship of the real and the unreal, or suggesting a more ambiguous comparison that puts the true nature of both images or portraits into doubt. This is why, when we see Jahangir peering into a painting of the Virgin we can never be sure the scene is not another elaboration of the ancient topos of contrasting truth with illusion, questioning the nature of existence.

Other embedded paintings offer intriguing dimensions to ponder. In the British Library *Khamsa* of Nizami, the painting of Aflatun (Plato) playing music

to the animals that contains several embedded paintings, all of them in excess of textual requirements. The philosopher plays an organ on which is shown several pictures. One of these shows a figure in European dress, which would have been an obvious cultural signifier of the cultural other, as does another picture of one European painting another, perhaps an allusion to the artifice of the Europeans and the fact that a European organ of this kind was brought to the Mughal court in 1581.[31]But it could also be a reference to Plato's European origins. Another embedded image on the organ depicts Majnun in the wilderness, a character in Arabic and Persian literature who is in self-exile in the wilderness communing with animals, mourning the loss of his one true love, Layla, so that he eventually becomes a wandering ascetic. Like many tales of this kind, passionate romance is used as a metaphor for sacred love. This embedded image serves to create an intertextual (or interpictorial) parallel with the story of Aflatun who we see here, playing the organ. Aflatun also goes into the wilderness to find out about the mystery of harmony in music, its effects on the emotions and its correspondences with nature. Like Majnun, Aflatun was revered for his ascetic spirit. The illustration depicts the magic making of the sage's music, which is able to send to sleep the animals that listen to it and he is able to miraculously wake them up with a change of tune. Plato's act of creating music is also compared to a magician's spell that is initiated by the act of drawing a magic circle referred to as a *khat-i mandal,* around him to perform his music. The embedded images allow for the display of more than one visual narrative. The art of the Europeans is shown as another image on the organ, where one figure paints another and is to be associated with Aflatun's miraculous powers. One is reminded of the remark of Abu'l Fazl which reveals a general opinion about the Europeans' painting as "magic-making" which could have a peculiar effect on its viewers, so in European paintings viewers are tricked into believing that "inanimate objects appear to come alive." The embedded images, a peculiarly Mughal intervention in this tale, add to the mental vision of Plato as a wise ascetic with mysterious powers of art and music. But they also spark a number of reflections on the truth behind appearances create intertextual readings.

In the celebrated painting of the Jahangir on the hourglass throne there is an embedded image held by the figure who appears to come last in the "hieratic" organisation of religions from Shaykh to Ottoman Sultan, and James I, King of England, this is the Hindu at the bottom of the painting. The embedded painting depicts a man accompanied by an elephant, showing deep obeisance to something or someone out of the frame. The image presents an aperture into another world, or 'the rest of the world' which continues the hierarchy suggested in the main painting of paying homage to the Emperor. The elaborate hourglass throne held up by supernatural beings; the magical figural patterning of the carpet and the cherubs also appear to challenge any one dominant reality,

and like the embedded image lend a dream-like quality to the painting. It appears to us today as a collage of different surfaces and dimensions, where fragments of the dream world are tied up with myth and political and religious symbolism, each representing a different kind of reality and different ways of looking at the world.

The Origins of Reflexivity

Progress has been made in providing some account of how reflexivity in art functions and what its origins are in the various arts, usually by reference to philosophy[32] or literary theory.[33] Islamic philosophical thought and literature share parallel reflexive notions with the visual arts. The study of reflexivity in non-Euro-American cultures is one of the most neglected areas of research in literary theory, art history and philosophy. So far to date, there are virtually no studies of a similar nature on the reflexive thought involved in Islamic philosophy or specifically in the visual arts.[34] What I have tried to do here is to explore the evidence of reflexive thought in Islamic poetry and philosophical texts (with supplementary material from Jesuit writings), and to show logically analogous visual equivalents in Mughal painting. This way, it is possible to see how Mughal painting: functioned on a highly intellectual level, comparable to conceptual or abstract thought.

The use of reflexivity in the form of embedded images may be seen as a way to add a new layer of meaning to painting. In addition to this, it encourages a new method of visual interpretation where meaning is to be found 'inside' the pictorial space and even inside the pictorial space of the embedded painting. It goes without saying that the viewer considers both spaces in exploring aspects of the painting's meaning. This viewing is analogous to the Islamic literary concept of "meanings within meanings" more commonly characterised as "outer meaning" and "inner meaning", *zahir* and *batin* respectively. These terms also imply esoteric meaning (*batin*) and exoteric or outer appearance (*zahir*). Knowledge of this duality appears to have been engaged by the Mughals' encounter with European art. This may be seen in a statement by Abu'l Fazl, which demonstrates the Mughal belief that European painting could suggest complex and subtle messages:

> Although in general, a picture represents a material form [...] the painters of Europe quite often express, by using rare forms, latent creation[35] and (thus) they lead the ones who consider only the *outside* of things to the place of *inner meaning*.[36]

The Mughals and the Jesuits held public debates on many different theological subjects, frequently discussing the meanings of religious pictures. Akbar often commented upon and repeated the remarks of Jesuits relayed by interpreters to the audience of Muslim theologians and courtiers (some of whom, like ‘Abd al-Samad and Mir Sayyid ‘Ali, were highly respected courtiers, intellectuals and artists). He often asked the Jesuits to explain such doctrines as the Holy Trinity and the incarnation[37] and with the aid of visual material:

> Then the priest, at the king's command, unrolled the books; and seizing his opportunity explained the pictures. He told the meaning of the Ark of the Covenant and what was kept in it.[38]

Thus, on more than one occasion, the debates between the Mughals and the Jesuits focused on religious issues extrapolated from the ‘inner meaning’ of paintings. In these exchanges, the Mughals could not have helped but become aware of their own perceptions about painting, as Abu’l Fazl’s quote reproduced above, suggests. Unfortunately, similarly subtle perceptions about Mughal painting have not come down to us from the Jesuit sources.

The Jesuits had several reflexive attitudes to painting that can be identified, some of which were undoubtedly shared with their Mughal counterparts. The Jesuits clearly placed visuality at the centre of their learning and communication. Required reading for Jesuit students from the 1570s was *De Arte Rhetorica* by Cypriano Soarez, a textbook on basic lessons of rhetoric and grammar, which included instructions on how students should practise creating dramatic mental images to fix complex ideas in their minds and in the minds of their audiences. This rhetoric, connected with visuality, became more sophisticated in mnemonic exercises where the Jesuits were encouraged to reduce complex ideas to their essentials and to assign these to a visual representation of a room, and in a reflexive manner, to place paintings within this room.[39] This reflexive process of placing a mental image within another is clearly a mental equivalent of an embedded image, a painting within a painting. The internal picture represents an extension or elaboration of the painting as a whole; this may also be expressed as “a thought within a thought” or even as “thinking about thinking.”[40]

These rhetorical lessons were bolstered by the *Spiritual Exercises* of the Jesuit Order’s founder, Ignatius Loyola, who urged the Jesuits to frame or visualise a scriptural scene as if reliving it through the five senses for the purposes of memorising and delivering spiritual lessons. Many Jesuit prints portray St. Ignatius experiencing a vision, which to the Mughal eye, may have been a remarkably striking embedded image.[41] Loyola used the word “*imagen*” frequently in his *Spiritual Exercises* to mean his practical (as well as mental) experience, and the noun also denotes an actual statue or painting.[42] Thus

painting for the Jesuits both reflected thought and conveyed or created new thought in the minds of others. In Abu'l Fazl's musings on aesthetics in the *A'in-i Akbari*, he demonstrates that the Mughals were aware of this concept:

> What we call form leads us to recognise a body; the body itself leads us to what we call a notion, an idea. Thus, on seeing the form of a letter, we recognise the letter, or a word and this again will lead us to some idea. Similarly, in the case of what people call a picture[43]

In comparing a letter or word to painting, Abu'l Fazl implied that painting, too is a kind of language meant to communicate "a notion, an idea." The suggestion that the idea is made known (revealed, made *zahir*) through a representation of some kind is complemented by the concept that such an idea is the inner meaning of that representation, which is to be "brought out." The Emperor Akbar is described in the *Akbar-nama* as "Lord of the World, depicter of the *external*, revealer of the *internal*."[44] The implication here is that Akbar was able to reveal and interpret esoteric wisdom from external appearances. This is also the case when Abu'l Fazl describes the Emperor as "Perceiver of the links between the Visible and Invisible Worlds."[45] Moreover, Akbar is also credited with having a "transmuting glance" (*iskri-i binish*), which transformed the painting of 'Abd al-Samad from outer form to inner meaning,[46] a statement which confirms the Mughal attitude that painting, as well as writing, has a *batin* as well as a *zahir*. In both traditional literary and pictorial terms, a recurrent way to represent the qualitative difference between outer form and inner meaning is spatially: outside or inside. To enclose one painting within another allows the internal painting to stand for a meaning 'inside' the meaning of the painting in which it appears. The embedded image allows the disembodied eye to travel deep into imaginary space to find other thresholds or frames that open up to newer internal spaces, to which are attached the value of esoteric discovery.

The Mughal *habitus* must have changed in the cultural encounter with the Jesuits; one of the consequences was that the Mughals became more aware of the potential of their own image making to convey complex messages about the world of appearances. However, to credit the Jesuits alone and their sense of mental compartmentalisation with introducing the Mughals to reflexivity in their painting would be to ignore earlier general Islamic forms of knowledge. It is possible that the Jesuits revived interest in reflexive notions already familiar to the Mughals. The embedded image ultimately may have derived from and certainly were sustained by descriptions of various visual appearances in Persian literary and poetic traditions, which were so closely followed by the Mughals.

David Roxburgh has studied the relationship of narrative sequences in Dust Muhammad's preface to the Bahram Mirza album and described one particular narrative structure as "stories embedded within stories."[47] This rhetorical device

of literary embedding has its visual equivalent as reflexive painting. The linkage between poetry's imagery and the images of painting is an established aesthetic practice in Islamic cultures. This has lead scholars such as Melikian-Chirvani to point out that in metalwork and in painting there is:

> […] a complex interplay of visual symbols, undecipherable without the key provided by the explicit metaphors of literature.[48]

Melikian-Chirvani has also pointed out that figurative art in Iran is meant,

> […] to convey in visual terms the mental images of which the metaphors in poetry and prose are the written expression[49]

In Nizami's poetry, pictures, or paintings, mirror reflections and idols are used as symbols standing for false reality or untruth. As in the Neo-Platonic tradition, painting is usually seen as a deception but in Nizami's poetry, it is also understood as a useful device to reveal the illusion of outer appearances behind which lie inner qualities and truths—these are not necessarily hidden but are more subtle or less self-evident than first appearances. Reflexivity allows for the window on reality to be parodied, for the picture to be represented as a fiction and it also allows for the representation of different qualities of reality. It may show the viewer how a picture is fashioned in order to allow him or her to think about the illusory quality of images and the painter's skill, commonly called an artist's conceit, which draws attention to itself, or by allowing one fiction to challenge another by nesting an image inside another in the case of the embedded image. Both literary and visual images demonstrate reflexive thought. Nizami's series of poetic symbols using paintings, mirrors, and talismans enforce the message of the play between truth and fiction in the visual and phenomenal worlds, and as I have shown, these dualities are taken up by artists who paint pictures that have similar messages. Nizami's comparison of the illusions of the world with the illusionary quality of painting may well have influenced the viewing of paintings, and especially embedded paintings, which serve to show the very contrast between perceived reality and illusion. The 'inner truth' can be found beyond the fiction of painting; indeed, the inner truth is to be seen not with the physical eye inspecting and believing the illusionism of the painting, but by putting aside this merely optical experience of looking at outer appearances (a man, a chair, a building) in order to mentally apprehend the truth behind these appearances of reality in order to arrive at a meaning. To arrive at this juncture is not to discard the simple visual experience of objects but to bring them into play with deeper understanding. The duality of *zahir* and *batin* also implies their co-existence and the cooperation as two kinds of vision: external or apparent observation (often favored by illusionist art and the art

historical appreciation of it) and vision of the underlying reality behind appearances such as formal, esoteric, aesthetic or mythical content.

When Nizami mentions paintings in his poetry, for example in the *Haft Paykar* story featuring the seven portraits of seven princesses, he conjures up a mental image of a painting, which he describes several times in his *Khamsa.* These visualisations interplay with the actual accompanying paintings in the book and the paintings of paintings we see in the gallery pavilion he describes (in Persian art this has been painted several times). This provides a cooperative relationship between the painting in the book, the image of the painting in the painting, and the painting in the thought of the reader, brought to mind by the text, a contrast between physical observation or optical experience and a purely mental envisioning preformed in the reading of the text and reflected back to the viewer by its "physical" and projected counterparts. In such a situation, the viewer has the choice either to understand the painting as part of his or her physical experience of viewing, or as part of mental apperception of the "painting" in the text. This interplay between mental apperception and physical viewing is thematised in Nizami's story of Iskandar judging two kinds of painting in the competition between the artists of Chin and Rum. The embedded painting may be seen as the equivalent of describing pictures in texts, sometimes described as things embedded in palaces, within fabled cities, the kind of story within a story or a description within a description that has become familiar to readers of the *Arabian Nights.*

An important function of reflexivity is to articulate the contrast between the process of observing a painting and the mental envisioning caused by a poetic text. It is a common occurrence in Persian poetry to prize itself on its ability to conjure up mental images and this phenomenon has been recognised often in European cultures.[50] The presence of this kind of imaging is particularly marked in visualising architectural space described in poetry. This happens in Unsuri (d. 1031):

> From its (the palace's) pictures, sight becomes a world of images,
> were you to look closely towards its wall
> Fortresses filled with sky-blue images
>
> Like idol-temples its arches are filled with pictures blooming like roses
> […] therein is limned the lord, feasting and fighting, upon the throne and in the hunt [51]

Also in Ibn Yamin (d. 1368), there is a reference to a palace in terms that suggest a mental image of a painting:

> Bravo! To the hand of the master who painted its images![52]

This tradition also carries on in the Ghaznavid poet Azraqi's work (d. c. 1130) who describes the royal palace in this way:

> The shadow, image and form of that *iwan* (vaulted chamber left open at one end)
> are all depicted in that azure lake.
> Adorned in it are square colonnades, painted in it are circular roundels […]
> in the colonnades are paintings of war-elephants;
> in the *shamsa*s (sunburst motifs) the portrait of the victorious ruler[53]

In the first verse, the palace is described as a reflection and in the second, aspects of palace architecture are described in relation to images which allow the writer to make poetic associations and move the narrative on, but it also allows him to point to how his own poetry is a vehicle for (mental) image making. There is a complex epistemological exercise involved in reading this poetry. The poet describes a colonnade (the first image) inside which is another embedded image: a painting, which is then described in order to penetrate space further: to move on to yet another embedded painting (war-elephants to be compared to colonnades) and then *shamsa*s (illuminated sunbursts) with other images inside them, for example, the victorious ruler to whose glory the palace is a monument. This process can be described as transportation from one image *through* another, much like travel through a series of spaces or rooms, similar to the processes used centuries later by the Jesuits in their memory palaces. The images described open up to new realities through the poetic device of describing paintings and images. And in a self-aware manner, the metaphor of painting is preserved consistently as a way of reminding the reader that reading poetry can be like looking at different pictures in a book: the *shamsa*, the sunburst motif is usually found in the introduction to illuminated manuscripts. In another poet's work, Karkani Shirvani d. 1198 the palace is itself used as a metaphor for framing or 'placing thoughts':

> His palace is like my thoughts, as I praise the sultan:
> the sphere is contained in it, the world depicted therein[54]

Again, this imagery shows that Persian poetry, especially the kind describing buildings or designed as inscriptions for buildings draws upon the power of the visual imagination so that there is a intellectual play between three dimensional space, and the space one perceives with the mind's eye, an interplay that must also have been evident in the arts of the book, between its poetry and its miniatures. Conceptual or mental apperception of the image (the internal sense of the image) was thematised numerous times in Persian and Mughal Indian poetry and religious texts and sometimes called, the *chashm-i barzakhi* (the eye

on the world beyond), the mirror of the imagination, which reflects a place called the *alam al-mithal*, the realm of mental images.[55] A similar play of words with visual images exists in Mughal poetry found in inscriptions on palaces and shows that the Mughals were well aware of the powerful interplay between mental envisioning and simple observation of the physical world. On the upper chamber over the doorways and verandah of a structure in Fathepur Sikri, we read:

> It is an object of envy for the highest heaven and the picture gallery of China/It is a lofty mansion: May it receive eternal approbation in everyone's eye/Oh Lord! May this house of fortune remain immune from the evil eye of […][56]

The verses emphasise the visual appearance of the palace by reinforcing the optical experience with mental images of "the highest heaven"; "the picture gallery of China" and "the lofty mansion". A description of the construction of the Dar al-Khilafat at Agra continues in this vein, referring to the building's appearance that "the soul of Mani is bewildered and stunned at its portraits and pictures"[57] Viewers of such architecture are to see the buildings in conceptual contexts as manifestations of archetypes (Khavarnaq, Irum, the *Kaaba*) existing in a realm that can only be imagined in the mind's eye:

> It has come to be the circumambulation-place of angels; it is that heavenly prototype of the *Kaaba* [58]

> The royal chamber is pleasant, agreeable and lofty—the highest Paradise has been merged in its fragment. The keeper of Paradise makes use of the floor of your palace as a mirror[59]

The use of imagery such as the mirror (here referring to the mirror like floor that the Queen of Sheba walks across in the *Qu'ran*), portraits and pictures is justified as they suggest that the beauty of the buildings constructed in Akbar's reign are duplications of heavenly beauty and are to be considered beyond mere visual observation and in the visual imagination, which is elsewhere described by Abu'l Fazl in the *Akbar-nama* as the "imaginative mirror of magical geometricians."[60] By way of an inspection of the appearance of the building (part of which are the verses inscribed in stone), the verses are meant to stimulate heavenly visions of which the actual buildings are reflections. This process is clearly one that demonstrates the Mughals' habitual coordination of optical experiences with conceptual (mind's eye) visualisations supplied by textual traditions. It is also based on the Neo-Platonic notion that sense particulars on earth such as beautiful buildings, are

reflections of their archetypes in the world of Ideas. The objects of these different kinds of vision are Ideas (seen with the mind's eye and with the *batin* of esoteric "inner" truth) and sense particulars (the *zahir*, appearances seen with the physical eye). What better way to illustrate this contrast in art than by showing a physical painting within which is an embedded one that questions its verity? Reflexivity in art occurs when the image appears to question its own powers of fictionalisation, questioning outer or simplistic vision and provoking an awareness of illusion or an inner image of thought that challenges the apparent truth. Paintings can encourage the viewer to question or deny the outer appearance of the physical image and to search for the inner meaning behind it, literally using inner and outer spatial dimensions.

4.8 *The story of a youth*

In Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's illustrated copy of Jami's *Haft Awrang* painted around 1556 (a work read at Akbar's court and no doubt an integral part of a Mughal aristocrat's education, although this copy was not known to have ever been in Mughal possession), several miniatures depict buildings that have inscriptions written over them that have a part to play in our reading of the story and our reading of the painting. A particularly complex painting illustrates the story of how Yusuf spurns the advances of Zulaykha, who worships idols (and therefore her lust for him has connotations of a temptation not only of the flesh but also of turning away from Islam). She complains to her husband that Yusuf had forced himself upon her but a young child witnessing the accusation miraculously proclaims Yusuf's innocence speaking the truth (*batin)* breaking the false image of the accusation (*zahir*). In the painting, the figures of this scene appear to act out their parts in this story, in the background the outer portals of a magnificent palace are inscribed with the words: "Tear open my breast and enter here/It is the most private place of seclusion." This points to the *batin*. The verse invites us to take a closer look at the inner truth of the text and also to look more closely beyond the portals (and the physical reference of the breast) to another inner meaning signified by another inscription on the archway *further inside pictorial space*, which reads:

> May no eye be graced with light without the sight of your face/ The arch of your eyebrow is the *qibla* of the people.[61]

The verse encourages the viewer to forget the outer appearance of the beautiful magnificent palace and Zulaykha's seductive wiles (and the connection of idolatry this suggests) by mentally visualising the *qibla* (suggested by the arch of the palace) and thus the "inner" inscription asks us to leave (exoteric and literal) viewing behind and choose the inner vision of Islam. The arch of the eyebrow fades to reveal the *qibla*; the sacred is found in or beyond the profane. The outer appearance of splendid beauty in the form of the detail lavished on the painting is denied in favour of the inner beauty of the meaning of the story represented by the primacy of the word in its calligraphic glory and the mental image is conjures. The visual play occurs between two sets of binaries: the viewing of sacred love through the metaphor of profane desire, and the viewing of inner space (the *qibla*), through the façade, a façade doubles as an image of the painting's apparent beauty (*zahir*). But these binaries are also expressed as spatial contrasts (inner and outer) in the painting and in the architectural imagery.

Another painting in the same manuscript, **Fig. 4.8**, deals with the story of a youth who is admonished to resist suitors who compliment him over his physical beauty, and to value only those who consider his inner qualities, not

outward appearance. Various levels of architectural space are portrayed, and the innermost chamber at the back of the painting has an inscription on the wall underneath a drawing of a figure:

> I have written on the door and wall of every house about the grief of my love for you/that perhaps you might pass by one day and read the explanation of my condition
>
> In my heart I had his face before me with his face before me I saw that which I had in my heart. [62]

The first verse refers to the grief of profane love as a metaphor for (or as a reflection of) yearning after sacred love. It is a reflexive mechanism whereby the text, which is shown pictorially written on a door, conjures up the mental image of writing on a door in the verse. This is a deliberate interplay back and forth between painting, reading and mental visualisation. The second verse reinforces the theme of different ways of "seeing"; it reiterates the play between inner mental vision of the beloved's image and its outward manifestation, but it does not rule out either that the inner, mental image of the beloved may be outwardly expressed as a painting of the beloved, which we see on the wall, a painting in a painting. This representation "inside" the painting is an "embedded image", a counterpart to the mental image provoked by verbal and poetic description.[63] The visual play is one that pits *zahir* against *batin* in spatial as well as visual terms, embedding the latter inside the former. The verses which speak of inner vision have their counterpart in the actual image which attempts to paint inner vision by showing the embedded image inside. This also complements the verse which advises one to be suspicious of physical beauty and outward appearances (the *zahir*), and instead seek the *batin* concealed within it.

Preceding Jami, Nizami's self-reflexive poetry encourages the reader to contrast inner mental visualisation with the viewing of images such as paintings:

> This poem's design I have adorned
> with seven brides, like Magian Zand:
> So that, should the sky's brides decide
> to turn their gaze upon *my* brides,
> Through like affairs and ornaments,
> each of them aid to mine might lend
> For when the seven lines converge,
> one point at centre shall emerge.
> The painter, ten designs in hand,

> of one main thread yet grasps the end.
> If that thread from the line should stray
> the others would be set awry.
> Though one trace not this thread aright,
> rightness remains, nor quits our sight
> […] I follow this thread painter-wise;
> on that main thread I've fixed my gaze.[64]

The poetry links the cosmological design of the universe with the cosmological design inherent in the structure of Nizami's poetry, the latter reflecting the former like a painting, but a painting one sees as a mental image. Throughout these verses Nizami seeks poetically to describe his own poetry, a reflexive action that has a counterpart in a painting that is about a painting. Furthermore, the poet re-emphasises the close relationship between poetry and painting and between the heavenly archetypes (the seven brides or planets) and their mental visualisation in his poetry, which he has chosen to show as seven portraits. The relationship between the brides and the portraits in the poetic imagery is the same as that between the heavenly archetypes clothed or ornamented as images or metaphors in his poetry. Paintings are also reflections of these hidden archetypes. The poet makes these connections with "threads" of his creativity but he must "gaze" (focus) on the main thread, a reference to the divine will. The poetry itself has several references to gazing and sight, which are used in the normal sense but also in the sense of mental apperception. This is a repetitive poetic feature in Nizami's work, perhaps best "illustrated" in his telling of the story of the artists of Chin and Rum who, in their competition with each other present a stark choice to Iskandar, one, simple mimesis, the other "conceptual seeing."[65]

The reading of the archetypal or abstract content of a text is a similar process of "conceptual seeing" familiar to educated Muslims in interpreting the metaphors and imagery of the *Qur'an* and is known as *ta'wil. Ta'wil* is what happens when the esoteric content of an apparent or literal meaning is revealed. This 'switch' entails a journey from one world of consciousness to another and consists of a process of understanding, reading or 'seeing beyond' the visible world or the world of apparent and literal meaning in order to focus on the hidden or the latent meaning. *Ta'wil* is an interpretational process that allows for the transportation from one level of reality to the level higher, beyond the level of meaning that is signified by the apparent and the literal. Nizami's poetry (and its illustration in the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa)* implies an extension of this process to that of viewing pictures and miniatures where a viewer is engaging in the process of *ta'wil*, which is the search for a narrative that is not immediately apparent. It means leaving behind the reading of the depiction of sense objects *qua* sense objects (illusionism) for the reading of

sense objects as elements in a language of abstract communication of semantic meanings, just as much through the relation and arrangements of these sense objects as through their symbolic dimensions. *Ta'wil* enabled the reader of the *Qur'an* and the viewer of the visible world to sublimate sensory data (or literal meaning) into higher and more complex abstract thoughts and messages connected with a higher reality. This kind of wisdom can also be explored by examining possible metaphors, myths and allegories in texts and paintings. Reflexivity in the form of embedded images, or otherwise, simply allows us to become aware of these two ways of seeing or understanding, so that we may see one through the other.

In Mughal art there are many examples that suggest the contrast of seeing with the physical eye and mental images. In one margin painting in one of the first two opening pages of British Library *Akbar-nama*, a kneeling man looks up to see a vision of two angels that appear to hover over the top of the page. The angels here are presumably part of the holy man's own vision, which appropriately reflects the imagery described in the text, surrounded by the margin painting that praises heaven.[66] In a painting of a dervish, musician and soldier in the Shah Jahan period, figures in the margin appear to look at each other over or through the main painting itself and this is clearly related to broaching the subject of different ways of seeing. The viewer's viewing is mimicked by the figures of the dervishes or praying figures in the margin in yellow, bottom right, at the centre in pink above and above right in green. The holy man in white appears to take a minute to lift his eye up from the book he is holding to peer into the pictorial space.

Knowledge of the two modes of seeing encouraged by these poetic traditions and painted into Mughal miniatures may well have encouraged the Mughal viewer and reader to compare or synthesise the mental imagery arising from textual description with the actual, physical paintings, as we are encouraged to do so today. Some scholars have recently studied the two differing modes of seeing, one conceptual, the other, observation of physical details in connection with Persian poetry and literature.[67] My argument here is that these two modes of seeing are frequently dramatised in visual terms in painting, usually with reflexive painting and this more accurately depicts the real *mythos* of Nizami's work: the complex process of visualisation and what this means. In Nizami's poetry, we are continually evaluating different (yet often cooperative) forms of vision, which are in fact, different ways of understanding (seeing) the world. The contrast of simple viewing and complex vision allows him to point to conceptual or esoteric reading of his poetry, rather than the employment of a literal reading.[68] But this *mythos* is seen also in the Mughals' pictorialisation of Nizami's work, in the British Library

Khamsa, and in a sense, the mimesis of this work is not the simulacra of sense particulars but faithfulness to Nizami's complex notion of visualisation.

The Mughal *Khamsa* expresses the interplay between the two modes of seeing, one as the simple illustration of the text and the other as embedded imagery, which reflects abstract thought encouraged by the text. If we return to the example of the disputing physicians painting in that manuscript **Fig. 1.4** we can see that it can read in a variety of ways, and particularly because both the text and painting allude to highly abstract and complex notions of representation. Two physicians confront each other in a debate. Art historians of Mughal art have never really gone beyond retelling the story in the text that relates to this image and this only cursorily:

> Two physicians of the same school quarrel because each claims superiority. One night they agree to contest in courage and in skill. The one makes a potion of deadly poison. The other drinks it followed by an antidote. He then picks a rose, and breathing a spell over it, offers it to his opponent. The first overcome by terror of the enchanted flower falls dead.[69]

Far more can be drawn out of this image if the art historical tools we use to do this are diverse and flexible and are applied to all aspects of the picture space using different processes of visualisation encouraged by Nizami's poetry. The story illustrated here is a tale of deceit. Two theologians try to resolve diametrically opposed views of the truth with a trial by ordeal. One physician takes poison and survives unscathed. He then breathes over a flower and offers it to his adversary who loses faith in his own argument and becomes so afraid and heartbroken by what has transpired that he capitulates and faints. His fear of the poisoned flower that is, in fact, a visual deception, a form of prestidigitation that true Muslims would not fall for, it is implied, and this causes his downfall. Among other things, the painting portrays the moment when the defeated, swooning physician falls to the floor watched by the victor.

It is not only a reasonable question as to why there are European pictures in the background in excess of the requirements of the text, it is also a typical art historical line of inquiry, but one that tends to be avoided in Mughal art history and sometimes because of any resistance to the idea that Mughal miniatures have meanings or functions attached to them beyond simple embellishment.[70] It is undeniable that the embedded Christian images in the background of the painting sets up a contrast between the foreground and background and invites even the most uninspired viewer to compare and contrast, to search for meaning.[71] The viewer in past or present contexts may consider that European theology, or indeed Christianity is implicated somehow in the visual narrative, when, in fact, there is no justification for it in the text itself. How does the embedded image reflect meaning on the image as a whole? Does it add an

interpretation to the story, or can that story throw some light on the embedded image?

Apart from this line of inquiry, which compares textual imagery with the painted image, there is also the possibility of pursuing interpretation along the lines of reconstructing the Mughal viewer's referential world, his or her horizon of contemporary political and historical events, a familiarity with which Mughal viewers brought with them in viewing paintings, a horizon shared with Mughal artists of the time. This would mean considering again the distinct possibility that Mughal paintings sometimes pointed to Mughal realities while at the same time illustrating legendary events. As for the disputing physicians, we know that there was much fanfare connected to the many theological debates, which were held between the Jesuits and the Mughals, described in the *Akbar-nama*, the chronicle of the Emperor's reign, as an invitation to scholars and theologians of all religions to debate the truth at the '*ibadatkhana* (or debating chamber), opened at Akbar's splendid palace at Fatehpur Sikri. The '*ibadatkhana* idea is an old one, portrayed by the epic Persian poets such as Nizami as a debate between theologians of different sects, a part of the Mughal horizon which was available for the Mughal viewer to reference. At least one scholar has referred to the possibility that the European paintings refer to real murals painted on the wall of Akbar's palace, suggesting a connection between the story of the disputing physicians and Akbar's court.[72] Even if the details are dismissed as decorative, a rather hazy art historical conclusion, why use detail from Christian imagery? And why did the artist in an illustration of a tale in Nizami's poetry make such a carefully painted reference (indeed it is not some vaguely rendered afterthought), to the kind of mural found in Akbar's court?

If the European pictures in the disputing physicians are a reference to Christianity, or to European culture, which is perfectly reasonable to assume, this extra-textual factor suggests that the depiction deals with a dual narrative (or two narrative options): that it illustrates a powerful and resilient semantic tradition *as well as* the debate for the truth at Akbar's *ibadatkhana* which, although an historical event, is yet another re-presentation of that semantic tradition, surviving in textual and pictorial form (and, evidently, on the level of performance, or the historical act) for generations. The form thus survives through various mediums of expression. The reference to Christianity side by side with a theological dispute appearing to take place in the same painting may be coincidental, but coincidences rarely make such good sense. Dividing the picture into different sections is the tool the artist uses to present this joint narrative (the story within the story). And as with the highly rhetorical tradition of Persian poetry, this painting also has other convolutions of meaning. It may be a solution to the problem of illustrating Nizami's complex poetic imagery.

Returning to the text, in the verse in the *Khamsa* dealing directly with this part of the story of the disputing physicians we read:

> Know (reader), that the garden of the world, whose spring time you are,
> to be a place of grief, in which you are a picture.
> Throw stones at these layers of earth;
> throw dust at this *mirage*[73]

The verse nests a picture within the garden of the world, which is an illusion. Nizami characterises the world as a garden, filled with the presence of spring in the form of the reader (or humanity itself). But the garden is a place of grief, perhaps because the spring is so short-lived and therefore only an illusion, like a picture, compared to the eternal life of the soul.[74] He invites the reader to throw stones at "layers of earth" (layers of external appearance) which may refer to the garden, the picture, the embedded picture, and the self of the reader (and perhaps alluding also to the dead physician) and all material bodies, which are in themselves illusions, so as to bury the mirage. The verse has a parallel in the Old Testament Genesis III, 19: "dust thou art and unto dust thou shall return". These layers of earth hide the true meaning lying underneath (to go beyond viewing outer appearances). Seen simply as an illustration of Nizami's poetry, the viewer is prompted to leave behind the mirage, or the "outer husk" of the painting, as a literal and illusionary representation, in order to penetrate the real meaning of the painting, beyond the mirage of its literal, outer appearance. But the European image within, which may also represent Christianity, may also constitute the "mirage" mentioned in the text. And this is the central ambiguity of this painting. Both the outer image and the embedded painting can be seen as mirages but there are a number of other mirages also mentioned in the text. But both painting (and embedded painting) and text seem to thematise eidetic formation: what it is like to have a vision or to create one in the mind's eye.

Added to this meaning is the punishment of stoning by death usually reserved for those prosecuted with illicit sexual behaviour, which is portrayed on the left of the picture in the form of nude figures fondling each other in a tub, obviously taken from European art.[75] Seen as an illustration of this verse, the European images together show us two sides of European image making, the sacred and the profane, the illicit and the licit, a contrast that may also be symbolised by the two physicians.

Another mirage is produced by one of the disputing physicians when he convinces his opponent that he has poisoned a rose by putting a spell on it (the rose is in fact, a ruse). The painting of the Christian subjects re-enforce the main subject of the painting: an excursus on the nature of visualisation. The sentiments of the verse allow us to see a reflexive cognitive operation, placing a painting within a painting, as the illustration (or materialisation) of a figurative

meaning or mental visualisation in the text. In this case, the poetic metaphor uses "a painting" to signify the mirage of the phenomenal world of appearances and is extended by the artist to mean that Christian pictures are as false as a mirage and as false as the trickery of the physician who deceives his adversary into believing that the flower is poisoned.

In the disputing physicians it is the European painting that is embedded and may be cast in the role of a "mirage" or vision referred to in Nizami's poetry, and yet also there is one further consideration, the subject matter of the embedded painting: it illustrates the subject of mental visualisation, as it is a saint's vision of an angel who he sees in his mind's eye. In such a case, the embedded image represents an image of the mind's eye, while the painting surrounding it (illustrating the story of the disputing physicians) is the literal story. Yet even the story literally supports the theme of visual deception versus true vision as one of the disputing physicians dupes the other with the mirage of a "poisoned" flower. Story, literal illustration and embedded image all mutually reinforce the message of how the transcendence of mere optical experience by mental processing leads to the truth. The embedded painting encourages us to see the painting as an image of thought. The row of heads adds another layer of complexity by warning us not to believe in the Christian imagery as literal messages. The viewer is continually encouraged to see with his or her mind's eye, and to shift focus and understanding with the different processes of visualisation required for different parts of the image, and in order to experience different shades of meaning in Nizami's poetry. The reader traverses an inexhaustible reflexive circuit of mental and visual denials and affirmations of truth and representation.

Multiple interpretational modes are possible here and the spatial depictions denote different mental compartments and levels and qualitatively different packages of information that balance and counterbalance viewing and reading modes. The disputing physicians is only part of a set of poetic images that run through the verses of the *Khamsa* of Nizami elaborated from a central, theological premise: the temporal world deceives the eye and seduces the senses, much like paintings and idols. Nizami's imagery acts as a form of rhetoric, or poesis, which reflexively comments on the nature of "seeing" or understanding and he uses the interplay of literal meaning and intellectual analysis to denote these different kinds of understanding.

If we were to follow Nizami's prescriptions, these reflexive Mughal paintings with their embedded images should be seen not merely with the physical eye, or with the eye that fixates on the picture being an exact copy of reality, or a simple illustration of the story, but we should look at these with the kind of internal mental visualisation and thought processes that both in their own ways are "poetic" readings involving a process of condensation and

displacement, but not only of the text but of the visual imagery.[76] Other examples of this "conceptual seeing" or mental visualisation also valorised by Nizami is the complex formal design of painting which Nizami refers to when he wrote: "The painter, ten designs in hand/of one main thread yet grasps the end/If that thread from the line should stray/the others would be set awry." This is both a reference to narrative order and the pictorial order, both of which allow us to read beyond the literal story and mere appearances in both painting and text; aesthetic viewing is another form of visualisation. The formal characteristics in Mughal painting lie behind appearances and require "conceptual seeing" or figurative reading to reveal them.[77] Embedded images show us that Mughal painting is not always a case of simple storytelling or seeing with the naked eye, they encourage us to shift focus and understanding, often to engage with visual experience in a reflexive manner.

The *mise en abyme*

Another, perhaps more complex form of reflexivity can be best characterised by the literary "*mise en abyme*", which literally means to "put into the abyss" and is taken by André Gide from a device in heraldry that involves "putting a second representation of the original shield '*en abyme*' within it."[78] Implicit in this kind of miniaturisation of a picture in a picture is the possibility of the abyss of infinite recurrence:

> On packets of Quaker Oats there is a Quaker holding in his hand a packet of oats, on which there is another Quaker holding another packet, on which there is a further Quaker etc. [79]

And hence the ideal of the abyss, the feeling of uneasiness with which one views the vertiginous reproduction of a reality within another reality. This is not only a way of thinking and producing cultural objects that is restricted to Euro-American cultures. In Mughal culture there are several examples of this phenomenon. If we go back to of the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, the principle is evident in the picture of Plato playing an organ which has pictures on the organ itself on a tiny scale, indeed one of them showing a European artist painting a European gentleman. This manages to be "three times removed" from reality, in that it features a painting within a painting, within a painting. This effect has also been called "*autonymy*", such as a:

> Barber getting a haircut, shoeshine boy […] having his shoes shined, a cook making herself dinner […] an elderly secretary cannot write the word "erasure" without having to erase […] All of which is *autonymy*, that disturbing (comical and banal) strabismus of an operation that comes full circle[80]

In the colophon of the same manuscript **Fig. 2.10,** the artist has painted the calligrapher of the *Khamsa*, ‘Abd al-Rahim writing on a page, presumably the *Khamsa* itself, in which his own image was destined to appear. The artist, Dawlat, has also painted himself painting the calligrapher. The colophon is a double portrait, not only of the two people mentioned, but there is, in effect, two portraits of ‘Abd al-Rahim in one, a picture, and a copy of a picture. On the floor of the studio is a painted book, which implicitly refers to the *Khamsa* itself: it is a ‘book within a book’, the book containing itself as a form of imagery. *Autonymy* has a literary form to which we may look as a possible source for this kind of imagery. Here, Abu’l Fazl deals with the art of writing and the nature of letters seen in black ink:

> A letter is […] a dark night ushering in day; a black cloud pregnant with knowledge; the wand for the treasure of insight[81]

Abu’l Fazl rhetorically suggests the power of the written word to conjure up mental visions (black ink/cloud) while doing so himself with his own writing and with his own black ink, which suggests a cognitive operation similar to Barthes’ *autonymy*. His writing points to itself, his imagery points to his writing. This kind of complex allusive manoeuver is typical of both Persian and Mughal literary styles and has been referred to as the “metaphoric use of metaphors.”[82]

Some of the most important Islamic thinkers use reflexive language and imagery to make their point. But this *autonymy* may be traced to a philosophical root, the concept of the *wahdat al-wujud* or the “unity of existence” of the philosopher Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240), one of the most important intellectual traditions that dominated how Muslims conceived of the visible world. This posits a one, true reality originating in god, and the creation is but one of his forms, in other words, creation is a form of divine *autonymy*, god creates creation from within himself. Such a concept underpinned the fundamental cognition that the visible world had no reality in itself, but was a copy of the original world of archetypes existing in the mind of god. Western writers have interpreted the *wahdat al-wujud* as form of pantheism. But whereas pantheism sees god in everything, and so everything in a sense is worshipped, implicit in the traditions of the *wahdat al-wujud* is that everything is an illusion and only god truly exists.[83] The concept was widely dispersed amongst the myriad Sufi movements and poets burgeoning everywhere in India from the fifteenth century onwards.[84] But even earlier in the poetry of Fakhruddin ‘Iraqi (d.1289)[85] famous in Mughal India for popularising the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabi, we see some of the most expressive

interpretations of a tradition of the *wahdat al-wujud* an a clear idea of how such a doctrine could form the basis for a whole world view, colouring perceptions of visibilia and giving us clues to traditions of visual cognition:

> Look closely and you will see that the painter's fascination is with his own canvas […] each image painted on the canvas of existence is the form of the artist himself. [86]

> The whole show is but one lone puppeteer hid behind his screen of art. He tears it away and reveals himself alone and all illusions vanish into nothing. [87]

It is notable that the self-realisation that the poet describes, which comes from tearing away illusion, is clothed in the language of seeing images. The painter and the puppeteer are both meant to stand for god. The use of metaphor is this way is predicated not merely as a poetic device but on the basis of an ontological correspondence (the greater act of creation setting forth a cascading hierarchy of lesser acts of creation which echo it).[88] Abu'l Fazl's writing is infused with knowledge of the *wahdat al-wujud:*

> Broad indeed is the carpet which God has spread, and beautiful the colours which He has given it. The Lover and the Beloved are in reality one. Idle talkers speak of the Brahmin as distinct from his idol. There is but one lamp in the house, in the rays of which wherever I look a bright assembly meets me.[89]

Abu'l Fazl's reference to the idol here is surprisingly neutral but under the influence of the *wahdat al-wujud*, the idol, the idol worshipper, and by logical inference, the picture, the artist are all as illusory as each other in the presence of the divine reality, the one, true light. The *autonymy* here is the *mise en abyme* of god creating existence within himself, god makes god exist. Analogous with this, paintings or images embedded within paintings (or paintings which repeat themselves with internal duplications, as in the Quaker Oats advertisements) show the truth of the illusory quality of paintings and these embedded works are visual equivalents of a self-productive higher order thought which reflects upon the nature of mental states and their representations.

Another way that the Mughals came into contact with mystical ideas that questioned reality and shaped their cognition of the visible world in particular was the Sanskrit *Yogavasisthamaharamayana* (the *Jog Vashisht*). This is a poetical work which focuses on Vedantic philosophy, and significantly, the illusoriness of the physical world. Perhaps because of his own personal interest in the work, the Emperor Akbar ordered a Persian translation of this around 1597-98 and there is an illustrated copy in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin,

with 41 illustrations dating from 1602. Jahangir made a specific comparison between Vedantic philosophy and Islamic Sufism.[90] The work was also highly valued generations later and was autographed by Shah Jahan and by his son Dara Shikoh who translated many Sanskrit texts. In the *Jog Vashisht*, sculptures, carved reliefs, pictures and reflected images are described as a means to indicate the true nature of reality: all other external appearances are deceptive. Divine knowledge is described as a stone and creation and created forms as pictures carved onto that stone, but which are, in essence, made of the same material as that stone. This principle is active also in the philosophy of the *wahdat al-wujud* (that all is god, and god is all) and must explain the Mughals' attraction to the Sanskrit work. For the *wahdat al-wujud*, there is only one true reality and one indivisible unity of consciousness and the world. All its manifestations, including ourselves, form an elaborate system of metaphors, or signs leading back or pointing to the origin of creation, the divine artist.[91] These sentiments are present where Abu'l Fazl dilates upon the subject of the written word:

> […] in the eyes of the friends of true beauty, a letter is the source from which the light confined within it beams forth; and, in the opinion of the far-sighted, it is the world-reflecting cup [a mythical cup which reveals the secrets of the seven heavens] in the abstract. The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate; it contains the secret word[92]

This passage links writing with its archetype in heaven, the Word. But this analogical thinking also allows the Mughal reader and viewer to trace the book, as well as the picture to its archetype. In Persian culture the author Khvandamir wrote about god as the *naqqash-i azal* (the immortal painter) and his creation was compared to "an album with heaven as its leaves" or as a "workshop of variegated paintings of changing colours"[93] The original act of creation takes place outside of time and without physical labour but the artist's creation is distinguished by these very principles.[94] At the root of this intertextual edifice is a belief in one true reality duplicated many times by natural and artificial creations. Painting is also a copy of a copy (as the *mise en abyme* copies itself, within itself). Divine creation unfolds from within the Divine itself. The Divine is a cloth from which is formed all the folds of creation, even though mortals care only to see these folds, everything is reducible to the same cloth. And in the same way, the viewing of the things of this world, and the images that imitate them and imitate artists painting them, are all illusions that generate illusions within themselves and are further removed from the one, true reality, being copies of copies.

In many theological and philosophical traditions, paintings are considered to be copies of copies. It is within this cognitive pattern that images such as the

one in the Kervorkian Album, of a portrait of Shah Jahan standing on the world holding a locket of himself can be explained.[95] It creates the effect of challenging perceived reality, and the *mise en abyme* here is a copy of a copy of the original, the "real" visage of the Emperor.[96] Simply put, a clue to the logic behind the *mise en abyme* here may be found as long ago as Porphyry who reports that Plotinus was supposed to have refused to have a portrait painted of himself, objecting to the notion that he must consent to leave, as a desirable spectacle for posterity, "an image of an image." The Mughal painting of Christ **Fig. 4.4** is also a copy of a copy as is Dawlat's illustration showing him painting the calligrapher 'Abd al-Rahim. Plato's concept of an image "three times removed" from reality is certainly a familiar one in both Western and Islamic traditions.[97] Shah Jahan's standing on the world with a locket of himself, thematises an image of an image of an image, the original (the person of the emperor); the fictional image of the emperor (duplicated) shows him to be a celestial archetype copied several times. He wears two crescent moons on a purple turban with stars, and there is a crescent moon painted above, which serves to create a series of correspondences between heavenly archetypes and their reflections on earth.

Perhaps one of the most impressive examples of the logic of *autonymy* and the *wahdat al-wujud* in visual terms in Mughal painting is in the Berlin Album painting of a man, possibly an artistic supervisor, or artist who carries a painting in his hands to someone outside of the frame to the left **Fig. 4.2**. He offers up a self-portrait showing himself, again, offering up a picture to a person placed outside of the frame. **Fig. 4.9**. The picture in the picture features the same green background and the man portrayed has the same beard and wears the same white clothes, gold sash and red shoes. With the aid of a magnifying glass, one can also spot a third, further 'internal duplication' of the same picture of the white figure holding a picture. We get the impression that time is repeating itself and that an illusion is copying or creating itself within itself.

4.9 *Detail of figure 4.2*

This picture is remarkable in that it is purely and self-consciously about painting (sees **Fig. 4.2**), shedding all reference to anything outside of painting.[98] The painting creates three levels of fiction, one inside the other. The picture in the Berlin Album presents an inconsistent conception of space; see, for example the way in which the cornice of the square building to the bottom left hangs illogically on the corner. The figure offering a picture to someone outside of the frame appears to float above this building. The large figure on the right paints on a board that appears to rest on a line created by the floor and the base of the building; an evidently impossible feat. The "window" behind the painter in red to the left just as easily could be a framed painting, which contrasts with the other paintings portrayed in this space, one a Virgin Mary figure and on the right a landscape with figures. Viewed as a whole, the painting is a series of compartments, frames, squares each preserving a sense of its own spatial reality creating a collage of recessions and protrusions and paradoxical spaces, all divided or subdivided by framing devices. It is less concerned with representing coherent illusionist space or time but to deconstruct them. The theme of this painting is about framing,[99] enclosing, creating a wide variety of views, and shifts of focus, each of which can be read as a discrete area inviting interpretation. As such, it appears as an abstract painting capable of revealing the essential elements of the creation and reception of image making, referring to itself. It thematises image production and the fabrication of illusion. The *mise en abyme* of the painting in the red frame held by the figure in white at the top is a kind of logical conclusion to these complicated framing processes and explores the concept of different levels of fiction within each frame, it also suggests infinite regress and contains within it the fear of the abyss which is also the medieval fear of god's absolute loneliness in the vertiginous infinitude of self-duplication.

This intellectual pictorial construction may also be seen in another reflexive painting, this time around 1640, with an image of Zafar Khan and his brother in the company of poets and scholars **Fig. 3.1**. At the bottom, on the left is a depiction of the artist painting the scene, which may or may not be a self-portrait. In the background, there is a window appearing to open out onto a landscape. There are also various paintings of angels on the arches above. Levels of reality jostle with each other and the painting as a whole appears to function as an interlocking collage of many different kinds of depiction, as would happen in an album. The *mise en abyme* is suggested by the painting on the artist's lap, which, it is implied, may be a miniature version of the painting that we see as a whole, the painting turned outside in, so to speak, as it is in Nanha's painting of the submission of the Rana of Mewar to Prince Khurram and other examples in Mughal art.

The reflexivity of paintings of paintings are tools that show the structuring of a fiction and the illusion of nature and the world of visible objects, multiplying this anti-illusionist tendency is the painterly *mise en abyme*. This is a tendency towards "inverisimilitude"[100] not mimesis. The result of the internal reflection of the *mise en abyme* is that the Mughal artist painting these reflexive pictures succeeds in bringing home to the viewer the fictional nature of painting: with each internal replication, he creates one illusion inside another, each step removed from the 'previous' reality it has left behind. Such perceptions of internal space mimic the traversing of a threshold, which each frame represents. Each frame is the potential threshold of further meaning which the mind is drawn towards in search of an explanation. The *mise en abyme,* the image duplicated within the image, is also a way of paralysing the viewer, for this meaning remains as elusive as the frame beyond the limit of the viewer's sight. Yet it also thematises that sight, for the traversing of each frame represents the transcendence of one way of seeing by another.

Another *mise en abyme* is implied in the painting of the princess painting a picture of herself from a mirror held by her maid in the *Khamsa* manuscript, **Fig. 2.6** All are illusions: the painting, the mirror's reflection and the princess herself. In a rather convoluted way, the illustration presents a triple illusion: the idea of the mirror's reflection; the painting of this reflection; and the princess herself who is, as a sum of the pigment on the actual folio, also an illusion. The ambiguity of reality (which is more real, the reflection in the mirror, the portrait, or the princess herself?) is reflected in the accompanying verse where Bahram Gur says, "Praise be [...] upon that pen from whose tip comes this fair design."[101] It is not clear whether this verse refers to the artist, the poet, or to god for creating the 'original design' from which subsequent copies are made, and the way in which it invites levels of interpretation along the lines of the *wahdat al-wujud* is typical of Nizami's verse: only god is the true author behind all creations which mimic his power of creation. The verse could potentially also have been read in a Mughal context to refer to the Mughal artist who painted Mani painting a lid on the well in the *Khamsa* **Fig. 3.6.** The concept of "the artist" here, is continuously elusive: Is it the Mughal artist, Mani, the Chinese (whose painting Mani paints over); the artist of mental images, Nizami, or god who allows all of this to take place? The idea of levels of fictionalisation, or levels of reality, each of which require or invite concomitant levels of interpretation and attribution of authorship, finds its visual expression in the embedded image, and in the *mise en abyme*. The concept of the artist in Islamic traditions is clearly expressed in this painting, he is not a single, Romantic, or bourgeois individual but part of a signifying chain, a wider relational structure, a larger reality, elements of which reflect and engage with each other in a system of cosmic beliefs and social and aesthetic relations.

Conclusions

Although there are examples of reflexive images in seventeenth century European paintings such as paintings of St. Luke or St. Veronica, images of which may have been brought from Europe to the Mughal court by the Jesuits, Mughal reflexive painting was not simply a knee-jerk reaction to European art. The kinds of reflexive paintings discussed in Chapter Four show that Mughal art employed reflexivity in a variety of ways and for narrative purposes different from those used in Europe. The encounter with a foreign culture was in itself an important event, however. It added impetus to self-examination and gave artists and poets new perspectives on their own creativity. In many ways it allowed them to become more aware of the processes that form the *habitus*, the background to their creative endeavours and allowed them to visualise their own inherited artistic and philosophical traditions even more acutely.

The Mughals were undoubtedly aware of the reflexive traditions inherent in the rhetoric of Persian poetry and in Islamic theology. Abu'l Fazl's writing is permeated with this consciousness. As for far-reaching, paradigmatic theological concepts such as the *wahdat al-wujud*, this was often expressed in a variety of reflexive ways. For example, the painting, painter, the viewer, all ultimately partake of the Divine, and the primary inspiration for these expressions are a belief in divine self-reflection, where reality is thought or dreamed out of the interiority of God Himself.

The cultural encounter with the Jesuits did introduce the Mughals to different ways of verbalising (or conceptualising) processes of visualisation; Abu'l Fazl uses such processes as imagery in his writing. The discussions held between the Mughals and the Jesuits were often about the nature of images and visualisation, and although Abu'l Fazl's comments on painting are few and far between, it is evident that his writing marks a sharpening of Mughal awareness of the power and potential of visual material to yield implicit meanings and metaphorical associations. It is far from conclusive that reflexivity and its forms, embedded images, paintings of artists and visual *mises en abyme* were due simply to imitating Jesuit works, such as paintings of St. Ignatius experiencing his visions, St. Veronica holding up an image of Christ, or St. Luke, the patron saint of painting, creating an image of the Virgin or of the Crucifixion. It is more likely that due to a process of cultural exchange, the Mughals reflected upon their own traditions and no doubt believed they had discovered universal themes. They were aware of many reflexive processes in Nizami's poetry, for example, that could be further elaborated into a reflexive consciousness. Reflexivity was also the result of a series of artistic technical solutions, namely, the depiction of dual or triple narratives, one supporting or questioning the

other, allowing for intellectual dialogues within the works and seen most clearly in the montage devices of the disputing physicians, **Fig. 1.4.**

This complex play of interpretations was given impetus by the labyrinthine poetic imagery of Nizami. A key manuscript showing the cognitive development of reflexivity in visual terms was the Emperor Akbar's *Khamsa* of Nizami, 1593-95 now in the British Library. Nizami's poetry is strongly visual in nature; it employs descriptions of visual sensations and experiences that symbolise different ways of understanding his own poetry. "Painting" is used as a metaphor to focus on his own rhetorical devices of representation. A painting, a mirror, a mirage are not only metaphors used to signify the difference between truth and representation but they are also engaged in order to draw attention to Nizami's use of poetic imagery as a device, as a series of rhetorical representations of esoteric meaning. In this sense, Nizami uses these metaphors to effect a transformation from visual to mental imagery, a complex process destined to become more convoluted by the role played by the artist's image. What we read with our eyes, and subsequently, the images we see in our mind are continually contrasted as different ways of "seeing" and understanding in his poetry. The internal images of the poetry yield inner meanings (as paintings do) but gain added significance because they are also imitations of life. There is a continual process of tearing away surfaces of appearance, imagery, and imitation in Nizami and this tearing away process occurs in a parallel and mimetic sense in reflexive paintings. Whoever was responsible for supervising the illustration of his poetry in the Akbar period *Khamsa* understood this. Embedded images frame esoteric meaning lodged within the exoteric appearance of the depiction.

Studies of reflexivity in European painting give reasons for its appearance that occasionally parallel the reasons for its emergence in India of the same period. Some of the differences between the two kinds of reflexive mechanisms are often as revealing as the similarities. "Meta-painting" appears to develop as a way of fusing the genre of domestic interiors/still-lifes (with a direct descent from Northern painting) with biblical narratives and this was done by having "embrasures" or windows set in the painting to allow for there to be a "split narrative". This is best seen with Velázquez's *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* 1619-20, a device which eventually develops into the depiction of paintings within paintings. The art historian of this period, Victor Stoichita examined a number of framing devices within the painting such as doors and windows and the tradition "assemblage" of old icons embedded into more recent paintings on canvas. This developmental model based on a fusion of painting genres is difficult to apply to Mughal painting. There is no comparable still-life painting tradition in Mughal culture. Iconoclasm in Protestant countries in the seventeenth century displaced religious painting from religious places and

instead developed religious pictorial narratives in domestic settings, paintings that were produced in a long tradition of "disguised symbolism". The still life was just another example of the fusion of sacred with profane and was often visualised by the split narrative, or "split painting" showing religious scenes side by side with still-lifes, often with embedded imagery. And yet, in Mughal culture, the fusion of sacred and profane is implied in the painting of the disputing physicians, and where embedded paintings point to alternative meanings.

Whereas reflexivity is more overt and systematic in Dutch art, the reflexivity found in Mughal painting appears less consistently, yet its appearance does show a thematisation of self-reflexive perception, bringing to mind the relationship between the mind and the eye. A key difference between European and Mughal Indian reflexivity was the Islamic idea of levels of meaning and reality implied by the terms *zahir* (the exoteric) and *batin* (the esoteric). These categories were understood spatially and embedded paintings complement this understanding. Such denotations are not only spatial in terms of outside and inside meaning, with concomitant values of obscurity and elucidation attached to them respectively, but also implied are the spatial categories "surface meaning" and under-the-surface meaning, which imply an "unveiling" a typical poetic metaphor for finding esoteric truth behind the veil of the exoteric.[102] Pictorially, the embedded image expresses this spatial or semantic scission that allows two realities to co-exist in the represented space. In the disputing physicians, **Fig. 1.4** the curtain revealing the embedded image invites contemplation of the esoteric, the implicit meaning. This meaning, which transcends the limitations of the text (yet which subsists alongside it), and the limitations of the foreground where the text is most often literally illustrated (and more figuratively in the background) is revealed by the lifting of the veil or curtain and the doorway next to the painting in the background, both of which suggest further mental and physical space.[103] In Mani paints the lid of the well, the suggestion of a series of incidents of overpainting visually expresses the idea of surface and under the surface meaning, where one is able to read one through the other, and where one myth is superimposed over the other in layers, the last instance, the Mughal artist adding the Mughal pictorialisation to the mytho-poetic tradition of Mani's superlative skills.

Similarly in Europe, Stoichita identifies frequent unveiling/veiling devices in Vermeer's work, especially in a painting called showing a woman reading a letter and her maid drawing back a curtain to reveal a painting that brings the viewer into contact with different pictorial surfaces or planes (tapestry, canvas, map, bare wall), each of which carries a fresh signification.[104] Vermeer plays with pictorial planes, not only to signify depth but co-incidentally he uses these planes as cognitive ones, layering meanings each of which interacts with the

others to point up different viewing modes (one woman visualises the mental imagery suggested by her letter, the other observes a painting), and always, as in the Mughal examples above, there is a conflation of the penetration of space with penetration of meaning and the adjustment of vision. Again, there are a number of pictorial planes (surfaces) each of which yield different meanings.

In the Western paradigm, the discursive potential for the thematisation of different kinds of vision by the presence of the embedded image does not appear to extend to esoteric "vision", as such.[105] And the links between reflexivity and Descartes appears to make the distance between European and Mughal reflexivity even greater. Stoichita suggests that reflexivity, bolstered by a Cartesian inspired science of optics, became an art of "sight watched,"[106] especially so in the complex mirror imagery of the art of the Netherlands: "The Dutch knew how to thematise the act of pictorial perception as self-reflective perception."[107]In Persian and Mughal reflexive art, the distinction between one kind of vision and the other is an ethical one, not a "science of optics." This contrast is not only mythologised in the stories and paintings of Iskandar judging the works of the artists of Chin and Rum but also by Yusuf who is able to see Zulaykha's idol for what it is, the poet Sa'di who is able to "see the truth" behind the ruse of the Indian idol who moves because of an unseen thread, much like a puppet. Only Sa'di's penetrating vision allows him to see beyond the naked eye of ignorance. Even in the Mughal period this ethical and wise vision, able to distinguish inner realities from outer appearances is commonplace. Not only is Akbar lauded for his "transmuting glance" revealing inner truths, but also, Jahangir continually praises his own superlative vision. Even Jahangir's penetrating vision (reputedly by his own admission he was able to identify the work of an artist, even from an eyebrow of a figure painted by him) or when he contemplated the reflection of a flower in crystal pool, suggests a vision that is able to penetrate the most obscure truths or at least to contemplate them with the power of vision. One painting that thematises Jahangir's vision in this way shows him inspecting a very life-like idol now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in order to show that, like Sa'di and Iskandar, he is able to tell the truth from fiction. Under the purview of this 'ethical eye' is a mythical suspicion of the deceptive powers of illusionism. Reflexivity is a highly refined way of distancing oneself from the lure of illusionist pictorial devices, as reflexivity can be seen to parody the window on reality.

Another reason for the development of reflexive paintings was the rise in the status of painting in Europe amongst different social classes; this may be seen in seventeenth century Netherlands. It spurred on the thematisation of its production, paintings that show how paintings come about. There was a temporary rise in the status of painting in Mughal India (but soon to decline again gradually after his death). Those paintings that have been best preserved

by time and by the efforts of successive owners show that this rise in status for the art of painting was associated not with the rise of new social classes but with caprice of imperial patronage. Under Jahangir, the artist became a visible subject in painting more than in any other period. In the Gulshan Album Dawlat immortalised several artists of the age by painting their likeness in the album borders and producing new visual effects and relationships between painting on the edge and painting in the centre. Jahangir gave official sanction to the rising status of painting as a skilful and honourable activity when he had himself portrayed examining a painting a clear demonstration that the emperor treasured painting and wished to be shown as a patron who was closely involved with the style, appearance and subject matter of Mughal painting. Indeed, reflexivity in the Jahangir period consisted of the use of paintings within paintings (many of them showing Jahangir with portraits in hand) to project the imperial image, the heritage of the Mughal dynasty and his personal power, suggesting that the process of image manipulation and image possession were the very *jouissance* of kingship.[108] Jahangir recorded the magical aura of his gaze in art, which appeared universal and panoramic.

Studies in the reflexivity of Western art usually focus on the seventeenth century. But in the late medieval period[109]and in the early Renaissance, reflexivity developed as a result of a number of factors that have not been taken into account in later studies. A few examples from the Renaissance period can suggest similar motivations for reflexivity in Mughal painting. Reflexivity may be seen as an acknowledgement (or treatment) of the medium of exposition which supports or give material form to the representation. Similar to Barthes's *autonymy* is the way in which a margin painter appears 'in the margin': papermakers or burnishers appear on the page, 'in' the medium they are working with or producing, or how an artist appears within the image to paint himself, and to show himself painting. The reflexive operation consists in collapsing any distance that may exist between the *subject* of the painting and the *medium* in which it is represented; form is fused with content. This reflexivity has a long tradition in art from the Renaissance period where, on the Or San Michele in Florence Nanno di Banco sculpted his *Quattro Coronati*, four early Christian sculptors who were martyred for refusing to create an idol for the Emperor Diocletian. Under the *Quattro Coronati* there are shown two sculptors sculpting sculptures in the medium of stone and this is shown as a stone relief in the *predella*. They almost appear as reliefs that are sculpting themselves.[110] This shares an entirely similar effect with the Gulshan margin drawings in particular which show us how painting comes about, how objects are observed and how paints are applied *in* the medium itself; giving the impression that the medium from which the image is made forms itself into the image, both distinct and indistinct from each other, as the Divine is both immanent and transcendent in

relation to creation in the scheme of the *wahdat al-wujud*. Margin paintings that show us papermaking techniques as images on or "in" the paper (or portraits of painters painting calligraphers lodged in illustrated books, **Fig. 2.10**) represent a truth to materials, a presentation of them for what they are: materials and techniques in the process of refining an image, and that is the very subject which presents itself, paper presenting itself as paper, painting as painting.

There is in Mughal reflexive painting much scope for psychoanalysis, as it may be seen as a form of human self-awareness.[111] No less than poetry or poesis, reflexive painting mirrors the mind's powers of visualisation. Aesthetic refinement develops when the self perceives the self in a process of withdrawing from the external senses and sense particulars. This withdrawal from the world "as it is," allows for abstract thought and aesthetic reflection to take place.[112] But within this global tendency local expression persists. Reflexivity is intertextual and interpictorial; it selects traditional images and topoi and introduces newer versions of the same topoi. Inherently reflexive is the process of painting foundational myths about painting and illusory images (expressed in Mughal and Persian culture as the "magic" of painting; Mani, Bihzad, the competition between the artists of Chin and Rum; the king as perceiver of truth and deception). These myths create out of themselves their own recurrence.

Although reflexivity in Mughal art is not widespread and its occurrence relatively sporadic, at least in what art remains to us today, which indeed is only a fraction of the total output of these centuries of cultural production, these images of self-reflection give us important clues to the nature of visual thinking in Mughal culture. Recognised and studied in Euro-American cultures, evidence of reflexivity in Mughal art requires that it be treated as seriously and with as wide a variety of art historical and theoretical approaches as its European or American counterparts. Eventually, these approaches will be further refined and made more culturally diverse. Rather than viewing Mughal painting primarily as a repository of historical details, or as child-like manifestations of stories, reflexivity highlights a characteristic of Mughal painting that has been consistently overlooked: its capacity to reflect intellectual patterns consistent with other products of Mughal and Persian culture, such as literature and poetry. Reflexivity restores to Mughal painting the wealth of its intellectual property.

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[1]Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 201.

[2] Note the full title of Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*. For a general bibliography see Paisley Livingston, 'Nested Art' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 613 Summer 2003: 243-245. Livingston's definition of nested art is a work which "nests another, real or imaginary, work of art just in case at least part of the latter work's structure is displayed in the former 'matrix'

work" 233. Much of nested art reflects concerns about the nature of art but not all of it is reflexive. Conversely, 'reflexive' paintings, the general term employed here, are not all examples of nested art; for paintings that show artists painting may not provide a view of a painting and so, even though they show us the subject of image making in an image, they are not strictly nested images.

[3] Robert Stam refers to the traditions of reflexivity as embodied in novels, plays and films as something "which interrogate literary and filmic conventions, which break art as enchantment and point to their own factitiousness as textual constructs [...] Reflexivity subverts the assumption that art can be a transparent medium of communication, a window on the world," R. Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xi.

[4]As Stoichita writes of the European parallels: "They are genuine 'theoretical objects', paintings whose theme is *painting*. An in-depth analysis is imperative." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 3.

[5] Master of the Augustinians' Altarpiece, oil on wood, Nurenburg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Germany.

[6]Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, fig. 70. Many of Wierix's prints found their way to India, although it is improbable that the Jesuits took this particular example, merchants did take prints of this kind to that country.

[7] See Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting, The Logic of the Gaze*, cover.

[8] For a detailed analysis of this painting, see Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 3-16 and frontispiece. For a good summary of various interpretations of this painting, see Kevin Bongiorni, "Velasquez, Las Meninas: Painting the reader'' *Semiotica* 144-1/4 (2003): 87-100. For a detailed analysis of phenomenological experience attending this painting, see G. Minissale, *Framing Consciousness in Art* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

[9] Bibliothéque Nationale, Paris, see A. Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 15.

[10] David Roxburgh has brought to light a similar phenomenon in Persian arts of the book. Describing a miscellany of Iskandar Sultan, "The depiction of bookbinding components alludes to binding that contains the book; it makes the book a subject of representation." This is referred to as a "reflexive movement." 'The Aesthetics of Aggregation: Persian Anthologies of the Fifteenth Century', in Grabar and Robinson, eds. *Islamic Art and Literature* (Princeton, 2001), 128. The author also refers to particular papermaking techniques that call to attention the collage effect of the various kinds of subject matter 'cut and pasted' together in a miscellany; the technique also, however, brings into view 'paper' as a visual, reflexive signifier. It must be noted also here that Roxburgh's argument about the polysemic reading of the Persian album and its myriad images was possibly also a precedent for the lay-out of the disputing physicians painting, a series of paintings *on display*, juxtaposed in intra-pictorial relationships.

[11] Authors and scribes are portrayed in a frontispiece to *Rasa'il Ikwan al-Safa'*, Baghdad, 1287. E. Sims et. al, *Peerless Images*, 42, fig. 56, Istanbul, Sulemaniye Library, Esad Efendi 3638, f. 3v. The tradition could go back to illustrations in the texts of Dioscorides.

[12] See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 12

[13] Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 207-215. Stoichita also links the depiction of mirrors in paintings as a reflexive moment, such as in the much celebrated painting of the

Arnolfini Wedding Portrait by Jan van Eyck, because, on the one hand it "achieved the clarity of the transposed self-portrait, and on the other, revealed itself to be a direct reference to the 'production of the image' " (222).

[14] For these portraits and several others, see Koch and Beach, *Padshahnama*, 213-217.

[15] A term coined by Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 93.

[16] Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 194

[17] "The frame separates the image from anything that is non-image. It defines what is framed as a meaningful world as opposed to the world outside-the-frame, which is simply the world experienced." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware lmage*, 30. For a fuller discussion of conceptualisations of the frame, see Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1987) and Minissale, *Framing Consciousness*.

[18] Koch and Beach, *Padshahnama*, 120.

[19]Abu'l Qasim Firdausi, *Shah-name*, IV, ed., Muhammad, Dabirsiyaki (Tehran, 1335), 1797, line 588. See also the glossary in. Meisami, *Haft Paykar*, 164.

[20] Sotheby's Sale Catalogue, *Arts of the Islamic World Including Twentieth Century Middle Eastern Paintings* (London: Thursday, 18 October 2001), Lot 63, 59.

[21] In a devotional emblem book, the *Veridicus Christianus*, 1601-03 by Johannes David, various instructions for meditation encourage the reader to make a comparison between the creative act of painting and painting an internal mental image. "Just as famous and outstanding painters must do their best to represent after the life that which they have chosen to *imitate* by art, so Christians must *imitate* Christ in their lives and relations with others, as well as in their deeds, until they show Christ in themselves, as if depicted after the life […] everything that helps us to lead a Christian and virtuous life helps us likewise to represent in ourselves Christ as the prototype, as if copying and portraying him on a painting." Freedberg, *Power of the Image*, 184.

[22] A statement attributed to the prophet Muhammad, Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 36.

[23] A. Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 128.

[24] A page in a *Khamsa*, in the British Museum, Herat 1494-95, Or. 6810, 39v.

[25]Bodleian Library, Elliot 149, f. 199b, a mid-sixteenth century manuscript from *Jami's Yusuf u Zulaykha*, published in Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, pl. XXXII a.

[26] Christies sale catalogue, *Islamic Art, Indian Miniatures, Rugs and Carpets including property from the Dr. Arthur M. Sackler Collection*, 18 October, 1994, Lot 9, 11.

[27] For an idea of this tradition see c. 1400 *St. Veronica With Holy Kerchief*, Pinakothek Munich and Robert Campin c. 1430 Oil on Wood, Stadelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt an Main, Germany and St. *Veronica Holds the Veil* by Rogier van der Weyden. Crucifixion Triptych, c.1445, oil on panel. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

[28] M. C. Beach, *The Grand Moghul*, 159.

[29] See Asok Kumar Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time*, 39.

[30] Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, 137.

[31]There are other depictions in Mughal art of the European organ: far more decorative in contrast and point up the fact that the embedded images in the British Library *Khamsa* were painted rather more purposefully for narrative effect. One example is in the

Bristol/Bath *Sharaf-nama* and shows two embedded paintings, one of a European lady or saint and the other of a gentleman, possibly also a saint. The painting remains unpublished. For others in this manuscript see G. Minissale, 'Piecing Together the Emperor Akbar's Lost *Sharaf-name*', *Oriental Art*. Another painting of a European organ is in a margin of the Berlin Album, where the artist has painted an angel and a picture of a saint, as if to suggest heavenly music. Ernst Kühnel and Hermann Goetz, *Indian Book Painting from Jahangir's Album in the State Library in Berlin* (London, Kegan Paul & Co., 1926), 28.

[32]Michel Foucault was one of the earliest theorists to identify this process in art history. See M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1980). For an overview see R. Gasche, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986). Gasche traces reflexivity back to Aristotle: "In the thinking of thinking – what Aristotle called *noesis noeseos* – reflexivity serves at once as the medium, the method, and the foundation by which philosophy grounds itself within itself. Through such a reflection upon itself in the philosophy of philosophy the philosophical discourse seeks to achieve complete clarity concerning its own essence" (15). Other key figures are Descartes: "First of all from the moment it became the chief methodological concept for Cartesian thought, it [the axiom "I think, therefore I am"] has signified the turning away from any straightforward consideration of objects and from the immediacy of such an experience toward a consideration of the very experience in which objects are given. Second, with such a bending back of the modalities of object perception, reflection shows itself to mean primarily self-reflection, self-relation, self-mirroring"(13). This is further elaborated by Kant, Hegel and Foucault, philosophers who have allowed us to conceptualise reflexivity outside of philosophy, especially in the critical analysis of a wide range of cultural products of which painting is eminent.

[33] In art history, the subject was treated rather cursorily by Michael Levey, *The Painter Depicted*. The main work remains V. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image.* An important study of reflexivity in its literary form and a detailed source for bibliography on the subject is Lucien Dällenbach, trs. J. Whitely and E. Hughs, *The Mirror in the Text* (London, Blackwell, 1989). Dällenbach appears to offer no in-depth philosophical study of reflexivity, perhaps because he views it as a self-generative phenomenon inherent and inevitable in the language and literature of modernism. As such, the subtext directs us to the conclusion that reflexivity is a higher stage of cultural refinement or self-awareness, a conclusion that cannot be ruled out for its appearance in Mughal art. For other books on reflexivity see, Janet Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (London: Methuen, 1984) and R. Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*; Christian Quendler, *From Romantic Irony to Postmodernist Metafiction : A Contribution to the History of Literary Self-Reflexivity in its Philosophical Context* (Frankfurt am Main; New York, Lang, 2001); Robert Siegle, *The Politics of Reflexivity Narrative and the Constitutive Poetics of Culture* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) and Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

[34] The reflexivity of Mughal art was first studied in 2000. See Gregory Minissale, *Painting Awareness: A Study into the Use of Exotic Cultural Traditions by the Artists of*

the Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami (Unpublished PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2000).

[35]*Khalq*. The word has also been translated as *Khilq*, an adjective meaning any disposition in human nature, whether intellectual or emotional ("tolerance" or "anger", for example), which helps to form different characters. The singular noun, *khilq* can mean humour, spirit or temper while the plural *aklaq*, has the more intellectual meaning of morals, ethics or good manners.

[36]My italics. *A'in-i Akbari*, Blochman, tr., 1873, Vol. 1, 96.

[37]See J. Correia-Afonso, S. J., *Letters From the Mughal Court*, 34.

[38]J.S. Hoyland, tr. *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S. J*., 139.

[39] Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (London: Faber, 1985), 10.

[40] The thinking of "thought"Aristotle called *noesis noeseos.*

[41] Paintings and prints of visions were a very popular Jesuit choice. Loyola's visions at Manresa and at the Cardoner were not only repeatedly reproduced in Jesuit prints by Nadal, but so were Philipp Galle's series of engravings of the life of St. Francis that focus often on his visions of receiving the stigmata a copy of which was taken to the court at Bijapur by the Jesuits, eventually to be pasted into an album page. These images were also taken to the Jesuit church at Goa, and one of the central frescoes here was a scene of the vision of St. Paul, see Du Jarric, *Akbar and the Jesuits*, 170.

[42] Marjorie O'Rouke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts and the Rhetoric of the Self* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 143.

[43]*A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 96-97.

[44]*A'in-i Akbari*, vol. II, 502.

[45]*A'in-i Akbari*, vol. 111, 451.

[46]*Akbar-nama*, vol. 111, 298.

[47] Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 194

[48] Melikian-Chirvani, "The Aesthetics of Islam' in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. T. Falk, 22.

[49] Melikian-Chirvani, 'The Aesthetics of Islam' 23.

[50] "The poet is an artisan of language, who, by sole means of language, produces and shapes images. It is when we stop ourselves from reading and *dream* that we see in our mind's eye scenes, pictures" Ricoeur in M. J. Valdes, ed., *A Ricoeur Reader*, 127.

[51]Julie Scott Meisami, 'Palaces and paradises: palace description in medieval Persian poetry' in Oleg Grabar, Cynthia Robinson, eds., *Islamic Art and Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 25-27.

[52] Meisami, 'Palaces and paradises' 40

[53] Meisami, 'Palaces and paradises' 31

[54] Meisami, 'Palaces and paradises' 35

[55] The authority on this essential cognitive pattern in Islamic thought still remains Henri Corbin, tr. Ralph Manheim, *The Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, N.J : Princeton University Press, 1981).

[56]M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri, A Sourcebook*, 258.

[57] *Tarikh-i Qandahari*, in Brand and Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri. A Sourcebook*, 294.

[58] Bada'oni in the *Muntakhab-i Tavarikh*, in M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri, A Sourcebook*, 295.

[59] M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri*, 259.

[60] M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri*, 298.
[61] See Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 41.
[62] See Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 427.
[63] A similar play between optical sensations and abstract perception is found in a painting in a Persian album of the author Khwaju Kirmani lying asleep in bed being visited by an angel; the text is embedded in the painting and reads that the angel "brought a message to me from the Exalted One". See Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 189. Here the text refers to the intervention of the Word in the story and in the painting, also embedded in the pictorial depiction of the event. The angel becomes the *transmitter* of meaning; the message enters the world of appearances, both in a literal sense in the form of the painting but also as an image formed in the mind based on description in the text. The same cognitive process functions in the visualisation of the Gnostic who sees a vision in the *Haft Awrang* published by Shreve-Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 44. In such a situation the primacy of the text, or the anchorage of the image by the text is displaced by the equilibrium established between both, a synergy that can make the viewer and reader aware of the mental image.
[64] See J. S. Meisami, *The Haft Peykar*, 299.
[65] See Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 187-88. He adds that such a distinction between modes of seeing is made in al-Haytham's work on optics. There are many references to two modes of seeing, one with the eye of flesh and the other with the inner eye. Plato states of students of geometry that "the very things which they mould and draw, which have shadows and images of themselves in water, these things they treat in their turn as only images, but what they really seek is to get to is the sight of those realities, which can be seen only by the mind." *Republic* VII, 510e. A *Qur'an*ic precedent may be seen in the story of the Angel Gabriel who assumed for the Prophet alone the form of the adolescent Dahya al-Kalbi who was seen as a mental vision, not as a physical incarnation.
[66] Possibly 1610-1615, in Or. 12988, 2r. See Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 36.
[67] See Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 198-205 and Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 188-89 and 193-94.
[68] Abu'l Fazl appears to broach this very subject when he speaks of calligraphy: "Superficial observers see in the letter a sooty figure; but the deep sighted a lamp of wisdom." Abu'l Fazl in *A'in-i Akbar*, Vol. 1, 103.
[69] Brend, *The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami*, 11-12.
[70] "[…] the Persian or Mughal would fabricate a scene composed of a series of beautiful and often irrelevant visual passages." Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, 115.
[71] This case has been convincingly put forward for Vermeer's *Woman with Scales*, c. 1662-63, which shows a painting of the Last Judgement on the wall behind a pregnant woman with a balance in her hand. Despite no documentation as to the reason why the artist has painted this painting within a painting, it has, nevertheless, sparked several generations of art historical inquiry, one of the most recent being Victor Stoichita who states, "The presence of the transposed painting makes Vermeer's work an *interpretable image*. The contemporary spectator (not to mention today's spectator) could (can) not easily approach this painting without wondering what it signified." Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image* (159). Furthermore, "Was the spectator at that time capable of receiving a clearly structured message (inaccessible today) from the painting or did he

allow himself to be carried away by the same kind of conjectural interpretation made by art historians today? It is an undeniable fact that we are confronted with an image that has been concerned in such a way that it has to be interpreted by the spectator. It is, moreover, an undeniable fact that this interpretation has been provoked by the presence of the transposed painting." (162).

[72] "It is possible that the wall paintings seen in Miskina's miniature imitate those that decorated the Emperor's palace there." Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, 133.

[73] Nizami's text was read out to Akbar. *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 110.

[74]In another verse in the same poem, Nizami compares a garden with a beautiful picture and adds that it was "decorated with unreality" meaning that, like a picture, a beautiful garden (the world) is an illusion. Darab, *Makhzanol Asrar*, 202**.**

[75] The picture is obviously European in origin, as nudity and sexual acts of this kind in Islamic art are rare and especially in this style. The panel to the left appears as a real opening onto a background landscape under a painted arch. It presents itself as problematic: this is either an obvious illusion, or the nude scene is taking place in the same room as the encounter between the disputing physicians. The image is based on paintings and prints from a fifteenth-century genre, common in the Northern Renaissance with the depiction of women's bathhouses. The central motif is a tub with scantily clad or nude bathers in it. In two European engravings, a woman and a man fondle each other in the same way that the figures do in the disputing physicians, illustration in the *Khamsa,* leaving little doubt as to the origins of the scene, see H. Duerr, *Nachtheit und Scham, Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess* (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), particularly figure 25, a scene of a Burgundian bath-house with two nudes comparable to those in the disputing physicians. Also comparable is *Jungbrunnen* fig. 40.

[76] Freud's terms are used deliberately to point up possible methods of analysis in the Mughal historical context, as well as retrospectively, from the point of view of the modern spectator's processes of reading and viewing.

[77] Conceptual, not merely optical seeing is implied by Roxburgh when he equates "graphic outlines" of *tarh* with archetypes, Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 199.

[78] Dallenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, 7.

[79] Magny in Dallenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, 22.

[80] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, R. Howard, trans. (London: Macmillan, 1977), 49.

[81] *A'in-i Akbari*, vol. 1, 103.

[82] See Hodgson: "[…] 'the 'Indian style' developed allusiveness to a disconcerting point of refinement […] the metaphors that had become stock poetic devices were now played with to take advantage of their literary history to produce new sophisticated effects: a metaphoric use of the metaphors themselves. There is no question about the aristocratic character of this poetry, appropriate only for a society where the privileged have behind them generations of taste." Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. III, 80.

[83]The philosopher Hegel made one of the clearest distinctions between these two modes of thought: "Either the divine is conceived as the creative force of the world, immanent and revealed in all phenomena. In this case phenomena are exalted by art as revealing the immanent divine. This gives us the art of mystical pantheism […] Its essential feature is that it sees in all phenomena of nature and mind, the indwelling and habitation of the divine. Or, on the other hand the divine may be conceived as *negating* the world, as the

supreme reality before which all finite things flee away, perish, are as nothing. All phenomena are then used as testifying, by means of their own essential nothingness, to the greatness and glory of God." Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel. A Systematic Exposition* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1924), 456.

[84] Through such figures as Muhammad Gisudaraz, (d. 1422) "the fundamental works of Ibn 'Arabi were made accessible to Indian Sufis and came to influence the development of mystical thought in later centuries." Anne Marie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 351. Shaykh Ahmad of Sarhind (d. 1624) in his *Maktubat* vol. 1 letter no. 43, observed that "at this time there are many people who believe in the *wahdah al-wujud*". Akbar himself came into contact with the ideas of Ibn 'Arabi by way of Sufi figures such as Shaykh Taj al-din Ajhodani, whom he met in 1578, see Muhammad Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 261 and 'Aziz Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 167.

[85] Even today, the words of 'Iraqi may be heard in the songs of musicians in Multan, Pakistan. See Anne Marie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 33.

[86]William C. Chittick and Peter Lamborn Wilson, trs., *Divine Flashes: Fakhruddin 'Iraqi* (London: SPCK, 1982), 77.

[87]Chittick and Lamborn, trs., *Divine Flashes*, 103.

[88] There are numerous examples of this in Persian poetry admired by the Mughals. Many are given in Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 108. The difference, however, between man's creation and God's is that the latter creates *ex nihilo* and man can only fashion what he has to begin with. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image* 193, footnote 151.

[89] *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol 1, 162-63.

[90] The Mughal Emperor Jahangir took instruction from a Hindu teacher called Jadrup and said "His Vedanta is the same as our *tasawwuf* (Sufi path)". See Cyril Glasse, Huston Smith, *The Concise History of Islam* (International Book Center, 1990), 379.

[91] The Vedantic *maya-vada* doctrine may be described as the "phenomenal world and as such a theophany and epiphany by which we are deluded if we are concerned with nothing but the wonders themselves and do not ask "Of what?" all these things are a phenomenon." Coomaraswamy in Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy*, 538, footnote 41.

[92] *A'in-i Akbari*, Vol. 1, 103. Writing as spiritual geometry is described in similar terms by the Brethren of Purity or the *Ikhwan al-Safa'*. See Necipoglu, *Topkapi Scroll*, 188.

[93] Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 92.

[94] Roxburgh *Prefacing the Image*, 108. This is exactly the concept lying behind Akbar's explanation of the reverse direction, that painting can lead up to the contemplation of god, even it is a lowly copy of a copy of the original.

[95] Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 55.121.10.24

[96] Such a concept underlies the texts of the *Ikhwan al-Safa'*, or brothers of purity, well-known and widely available sources of Muslim Neo-Platonic wisdom: "these kinds of animals in the world are only shapes and images of those forms and creatures which are in the world of the stars and the compass of the heavens, just as the drawings and the pictures which appear on the surface of walls and roofs are shapes and images of real animals." Thus the relationship of real, created things to those creatures with pure

essence is like the relationship of those decorative pictorial drawings to real animals. Ian Netton, *The Syncretic Philosophy of the Ras'ail of Ikwan al-Safa* (Phd. Thesis, University of Exeter, 1976), 31.

[97] Art is imitation, being a "third remove from truth" in *Republic* X, 601. See *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters,* edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). This reflects Plato's divided line with shadows, images and reflections at one end and the natural world, manmade objects and intelligibles (divided into those understood with and those understood without mental images) at the other end. *Republic* VII, 510-511. As an extension of this, Plotinus questions why he should have a portrait made of himself that would only amount to "an image of an image" Quoted in Soucek, 'Theory and Practice of Portraiture in the Persian Tradition' *Muqarnas* 17, 103.

[98] In today's terms, this is the same as when "The signifier has completely detached itself from the signified, from the "natural", from the representational structure, breaking apart both subject and object. Signs no longer refer to either a subjective or an objective reality, but to themselves, because there is no reality left to represent, and because what we accept as reality is already a massive simulation, 'a fabrication of effects'." D. Olkowski-Laetz. 'A postmodern language in art' in Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 112.

[99]"All picture frames establish the identity of the fiction." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 55.

[100] Used by Soucek, 'The theory and practice of portraiture', 98. Roxburgh devotes some attention to Western art historical formulations of an art which is abstract, reflecting the intellect, rather than appealing to the senses and implies that the similarities between non-mimetic art and an art that transcends imitation to represent intellectual abstraction is shared by examples from both Western and Islamic artistic traditions, mainly because of a shared indebtedness to Neo-Platonism cf. *Prefacing the Image* (194). He goes on to explain that Dust Muhammad actually eschewed images that attempted optical naturalism which would produce the "equivalent of what the sensory perceptions revealed in an initial act of gazing at phenomena (in an act comparable to a mirror's reflection) [which] was entirely unacceptable and suspect." *Prefacing the Image* (194). "the Persianate aesthetics of vision locates the creative act, the image […] at one remove beyond things seen." (196). There is no reason to suspect that the Mughals, who shared the intellectual culture and environment of the Persian courts, possessed an aesthetic of vision that differed greatly from this.

[101] Meisami, *Haft Paykar*, 164.

[102]See Bada'oni's expression: "Praise be to God! That picture, which the heart desired, issued forth from the invisible behind the curtain of felicity." M. Brand and G. D. Lowry, *Fatehpur Sikri, A Sourcebook*, 289.

[103] "Cloth, embroidery, and tapestry are interchangeable forms of an ancient *topos* […] the ancient anecdote that recounts the competition between Zeuxis and Parrhasios, during which the latter submitted a painting that represented *only* a curtain (*linteum*). By doing this he tricked the great Zeuxis into asking that the curtain be raised so that he could see the painting." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 265. One is reminded of the Nizami story of the competition between the artists of Chin and Rum, another form of intertextual

myth, which features a curtain obscuring painting from its mirror reflection, the curtain which conceals the idol in the encounter between Yusuf and Zulaykha, and perhaps, the curtain which reveals the Christian paintings in the disputing physicians, **Fig. 1.4**. The numerous examples of figural textiles in the pictorial space of Persian and Mughal miniatures also take on added meaning as embedded realities challenging pictorial reality in this context.

[104] Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 266.

[105] This interpretation is, however, quite possible with Velázquez's *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* 1619-20, for one sister occupies herself in the foreground with material existence, preparing the food, and in the background, or in the embedded image (which may actually be a mirror image) the other sister occupies herself with "spiritual food". This suggests an opposition between the embedded image, which represents the value, spiritual esoteric vision, and the external image representing exoteric values: the esoteric is placed *inside* the exoteric, as it is in the disputing physicians.

[106] Which is supposed to take over from the "combinatory machine of pansophy", see Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 156.

[107] Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*, 157.

[108]This complements Koch's notion that "The knowledge of the technique of a European allegory gave Jahangir and his artists the means to express, in painting, concepts of kingship which had hitherto been formulated only in writing" Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology*, 8.

[109] See some examples in arts of the book, particularly the margin, in Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1992).

[110] In the sense that they are "about themselves" in their material reality. Other examples are Verrocchio's *Doubting Thomas* a bronze sculpture also on the Or San Michele, which thematises touching: a double reference to the nature of sculpture, its evocation of the tactile quality of the medium and the nature of believing by touching inherent in the story of doubting Thomas. In the twentieth century, Lichtenstein's painting of a brushstroke is also "medium reflexive". It thematises paint and the paint stroke, fragments it into the comic, dotted print he is famous for, to reconstitute it as an image of what it is: paint.

[111] In this sense, reflexive painting is an outcome of universal mental processes of human cognition "the chief characteristic of the mind is to be constantly describing itself" Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, Trs. C. G. Hogan and G. Kubler (New York: Wittenborn, 1948), 44.

[112] For Hegel, painting is in itself an abstract, introspective and therefore self-reflexive art, signified primarily by the fact that it is two dimensional: "The reduction of the three dimensions to a plane surface is implicit in the principle of withdrawing into inwardness, this can be interpreted in a spatial form as inwardness only by virtue of the way it does not allow externality to remain complete but curtails it […] In painting […] the content is the spiritual inner life which can be made manifest in the external world only as withdrawal from the external world into itself." Hegel, *Aesthetik; Werke*, Vol. XV, 26f quoted in M. Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*, 20.

CONCLUSION

The major objective of this book has been to stimulate new debates in Mughal painting and elsewhere with a text that ranges outside of the subfield and engages with a wider art history. I have tried to show that there are ways of looking at Mughal and Persian paintings that are different to those attempted by art historians who have based their approaches to the subject on a simplistic art historical theory which has reduced our image of Mughal painting to the level of naïve illustration. It is my argument that we have not really tried hard enough to understand Mughal painting, and that we have presumed too little. Art historians have forgotten one essential feature: paintings whether in books or otherwise are also images of thought and reflect patterns of thought.[1] As such, the relationship between Mughal painting and other products of thought: literature, philosophy, architecture and poetry, has also to be re-thought. The approach attempted in this book does not reject interpretations of Mughal paintings as reflections of nature, historical events and political propaganda—approaches to understanding Mughal painting that have dominated Mughal art historical inquiry. Yet, the Mughal image is more than a mirror image of visual objects and more than a mere fragment of the text, and a text that only has basic information to offer: no metaphor, allegory or conceptual, rhetorical and figurative speech. This reduction of text and image to simple factual information ignores the complex thought processes that both painting and textual reading can inspire.

The aim has also been to widen the range of our interpretations and to suggest that this horizon of viewing choices approximates that potentially available to the seventeenth and eighteenth century Indian and Iranian viewer and reader of illustrated manuscripts. This has meant using the phenomenology of vision and other critical tools. We have reached a point in time where the more conservative historical approach only really offers the prospect of 'dumbing down' these viewing processes. The loose typology of interpretations and approaches in this book is transferable to any study of Persian and Indian art and to cultures beyond these. These are:

1. Reading paintings beyond values attached to illusionism or modernism. Mughal painting is characterised by a positive non-illusionist aesthetic, which is not comparable to the aims, objectives and methods of Euro-American illusionism. This aesthetic is not inferior to contemporary European art, but different, and we must understand it on its own terms. Depictions of space, time, light, and the non-tactile simplification of the body are culturally variable. We can come closer

to understanding the Mughal reading of these depictions if we keep in mind (but not reduce Mughal art to) the early modernist experiments of Matisse and Picasso, artists who flattened planes, created visual, notational vocabularies for the human body, and most of all, turned their backs on a long tradition of illusionism in order to promote conceptual as opposed to merely sensuous viewing.[2] In fact, modernist anti-illusionism is not at all new, and because these modern artists came later, their intellectual debt to non-Western cultures must be acknowledged in books like these.

2. Reading pictorial order. We have lost sight of the Persian and Mughal artists' struggle to perfect pictorial order. This has been shown to be systematic in several ways: in terms of integrating text blocks and pictorial objects with a system of measurements and proportions. It is evident also in a remarkably long-lasting and resilient chromatic order and most demonstrably with the arrangement of figures into geometrical relationships. These geometrical patterns are dynamic not static; they allow for a multiplicity of readings that reflect the processes of intellectual play. The viewer was primarily an intellectual, not a child. Various spatial conventions of hexagonal and symmetrical schemata allow us to see images as more than merely imitations of life.[3] These geometrically oriented, sometimes dynamic patterns of composition form a visual aesthetic tradition which I have characterised as a visual language that helps us to read paintings.

3. Reading painting for intertextuality or interpictorialism (which includes the analysis of the complex relationship that exists between images and texts). This is intimately connected with the cultivation and survival of myth and cultural memory. Painting may be seen as a form of social and ritual reproduction. It is inscribed into spatial arrangements that trigger aspects of collective memory and encourage the interpictorial transfer of patterns from one visual expression of an established story to another. In visual terms, this interpictorial approach represents an alternative reading of painting beyond the apparent telling of the story and beyond simple illustration. There is much scope to widen and refine this comparative study of fundamental themes such as fire, water, sun, sacrifice, cyclical return and other themes that use anthropological models of analysing knowledge structures and myth in textual and visual ways. Similarly, new literary criticism and comparative methods in world literature are important in identifying recurring themes. This kind of reading needs to be considered in any

art historical endeavour that attempts to leave no stone unturned in its search for examining how the viewer could possibly have understood a painting or text and the different levels of understanding such images in pre-conscious as well as self-aware ways. It is also important to remember that just as rhyme and repetition were essential devices to allow the reader to memorise and retrieve literary passages and the meanings connected to them, visual conventions and repetitions were counterparts of these mnemonic devices.[4] They also allow for the layering of meaning, where the values of one episode represented in a recognisable spatial order are readable through another story, an encounter that can lead to the multiplication of meanings attached to each episode, fused into a polysemic aesthetic experience. We need more sophisticated, critical tools to analyse the layers of this aesthetic response and this means looking to philosophy, anthropology and literary theory for ways to understand the phenomenology of reading, and visual processes. Most of all, we need to redefine narrative form and its processes.

4. The language of visual rhetoric. Attempting to read the wider, composite aesthetic experience of Persian and Mughal painting leads logically on to reflexivity, the lifting of pictorial language to the status of rhetoric. Beyond the simplistic definition of representation as mimesis, the aesthetic visual experience is painted into Persian and Mughal miniatures as a subject worthy of representation. It is with reflexive painting of this kind that Persian and Mughal paintings can be regarded as pictorially autonomous, another comparison with early modern art, which again, puts the latter somewhat into a position of being indebted to the former.[5] These elements of visual rhetoric and reflexivity free these kinds of painting from complete dependence on one referent, the sensible world. Reflexivity brings into view the development of a set of aesthetic practices and perceptions that, in the seventeenth century, became the subject of painting itself. Importantly, the embedded image allows us to see the development of more sophisticated storytelling techniques for visual narratives, allowing the artist to play with different levels of reality, questioning the singular window on reality, contrasting fiction with disguised fiction. This reflexive painting springs from traditions of non-illusionist painting practices and aesthetics, and rhetorical, intellectual traditions in theology and philosophy. Mughal and Persian painting was an intellectual enterprise and should not be routinely shunted off into the domain of the craftsman’s simple faithfulness to nature. Instead, we

> should always consider faithfulness to and dialogue with traditions of abstraction and higher-order thoughts.

The reasons for the development of reflexivity are universal and culturally unique, universal in the sense that reflexivity is a form of rhetoric that is found in refined textual and visual traditions and unique because the route taken to this self-awareness naturally celebrates cultural specificity. Reflexivity is inherent in Mughal culture; it is not only traceable to earlier Persian and Mughal painting traditions but significantly, found also in poetic, literary and theological texts which require the reader to go through several complex intellectual operations such as intertextual association, evaluating the interplay of conventional forms with innovation, and enjoying the play of rhetorical and metaphorical figures, whether deliberately planned or otherwise. It is one of the most important conclusions of this study that these intellectual processes were also visual ones. Abstract thought is spatially arranged and visualised. The space of the *batin* (inner esoteric truth) and *zahir* (outer exoteric appearance) may be expressed by the frame-in-a-frame or the picture-in-a-picture. In other words, intellectual and abstract compartmentalisations are inscribed into the depicted space of the images themselves. [6]

Ultimately, the view that Mughal painting cannot be studied in light of poetic, *a priori* spatial, mythical and abstract thought processes is a view based on the *sensus litteralis*, not the conceptual response to images. It is helpful to keep in mind that this contrast of two different kinds of vision was one known to the Mughals and Persians themselves and was made explicit in poetry and literature with reference to painting, a key discursive figure in the dialectics of truth and illusion. Paintings were consistently characterised as having a complex nature, depending on the eye of the beholder: they could be seductive, magical, illusionary, or simply informative when viewed with the *sensus litteralis*, yet they also had the power to enhance poetic feeling and cultural memory; exercise rational calculation, and focus the mind's eye leading it to withdraw into reflection on how one sees the visible world.

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[1] "[…] painting is thought: vision is through thought, and the eye thinks, even more than it listens" Gilles Deleuze and Felix, Guattari, Hugh Tomlinson, and Graham Burchill, trans., *What is Philosophy?* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 195.

[2] Plato said it was an error entrusting thought to "external marks" as seen in the depictions of paintings or notations for concepts. "Yet, the history of the adventures of man as a painter suggests, instead, that it is precisely the exteriorisation of thought in external marks which has encouraged the creation of images which not only are shadows or similarities, but also offer new models for perceiving the world." Ricoeur, *Imagination,* 131

[3] Michael Camille has reached similar conclusions about the will to find the true meaning of language: "language, like pictorial representation has its own schemata and functions on different levels. We should no more look for a 'real' language which will synchronise with what we consider the 'reality' of the time than we should waste our time talking about 'naturalistic' images." M. Camille, 'Seeing and reading: some visual implications of medieval literacy and illiteracy ', Art *History*, vol. 8, 1985, 39.

[4] This too, has been pointed out for European book illustration, Michael Camille writes of how "verbal formulaic patterns" have their visual equivalents: "the constantly repeated schemata used by the Romanesque artist served a similar purpose to the oral mnemonic formulae in literary composition." Camille, *Art History* Vol. 8, 35.

[5] For example, "Poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels. Literature shapes itself, and is not shaped externally: the forms of literature…belong to an autonomous literary world." Ford Russell, *Northrop Frye on Myth*, 67.

[6]What also needs to be studied further is the spatial sense in Mughal pictorial order: "Even if the contents of mythical and geometrical space do not correspond, their forms are to a certain extent analogous. Every non spatial qualitative difference is usually the same as a spatial difference." Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, 34. The extension I make is that these mythical and spatial worlds correspond to the visual world of paintings. We should understand the space of the painted world as corresponding to mythical or apotropaic space systems not merely to the 'real world' on the paradigm of mimesis. Thus mimesis is not the key to unlocking the reading of space in painting or as a way of understanding its message. It is through philosophical, mythical and intellectual contexts that we can come closer to understanding spatial representation. For Frye, myth acts as the pattern for literature, and its metaphorical quality allows it to play the same role in literature as geometry does in painting.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

In the painting of Akbar ordering the death of Adham Khan, the dominant red green colour contrast at the top of the painting is reversed at the bottom showing Adham Khan upside down, about to hit the floor after being thrown from the upper storey. Other parts of the picture resonate with the same colour contrast in a series of couplings. In a quieter scene of Adham Khan paying homage to Akbar, the whole picture is structured chromatically with the contrast of red and green creating a rhythmic interplay of figures.[1] Red and green rhythmically alternate with one other colour in the *Akbar-nama* painting of the birth of prince Murad[2]

The red green interplay is used often as a way of drawing attention to the principle figure in portraits of emperors who seem to combine their vivid power, and resolve their contrariness within themselves. The emperors Timur,[3] Humayun,[4] and Babur[5] on various occasions were depicted in red and green. Painting the principal figure in red and green clothes is also indebted to a Persian aesthetic.[6] A variation of this occurs when the emperors appear to meet each other in dynastic, allegorical portraits where one figure sometimes wears orange red in contrast with the other wearing green. This is not only evident with the portrait of Jahangir standing on a globe with Shah Abbas, c. 1618[7] but also in the *Padshah-nama* where Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Mewar campaign[8] and in a painting depicting the arrival of Prince Awrangzeb at the court in Lahore,[9] as well as in painting of Akbar meeting Shah Jahan, c. 1645.[10] This contrast continues in two portraits of Shah Jahan alone, seen in bright saffron against a green ground in both pictures[11] or in a deep pink on a green ground.[12] Saffron, associated with kingship, fragrance and gold,

appears consistently to adorn the appearance of mythical kings, often again with green as a contrast in paintings of Iskandar (Alexander),[13] Khusrau[14] and Faridun[15] in the British Library *Khamsa,* in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi and in the various versions of the *Babur-nama* and *Akbar-nama* manuscripts for the Mughal emperors.

The illustrations of the *Padshah-nama* manuscript show the most refined and accomplished use of traditional chromatic programmes in Mughal art. In a painting depicting the weighing ceremony of Shah Jahan on his forty-second lunar birthday[16] the potential intensity created by the close proximity of vermilions, orange-reds and pinks is relieved by the use of a block of green (in the form of a courtier's costume) placed at the centre of the picture. There are no less than six occasions in the painting where green and red turbans are contrasted with each other. Green is often used as a counterpoint to the brightness of orange-reds in this manuscript. In the *Padshah-nama* painting of *The Departure of Prince Shah-Shuja' for Kabul*[17] a highly symmetrical composition is offset by the contrast of the dominant vermilion and jade green robes of the attendants carrying flywhisks and in the arrival of Prince Awrangzeb at the court in Lahore various vermilions and cherry-reds are contrasted with a range of different greens. In both paintings, the pillars are painted in bright orange and sage green.

Appendix 2

In the construction of Fathepur Sikri in 1571 in the Victoria and Albert *Akbar-nama* colour is used to structure a complex relationship between symmetry and asymmetry.[18] Not only are red and green used as dynamic opposites in the form of the figures on either side of the painting, placed above the elephants, two light blue robes on either side beneath the elephants creates a symmetrical relationship, as does the structure of black robed figures which forms a square in the pictorial space. The figures in orange robes form a zigzagging structure from the bottom left hand corner, all the way up to the top left hand figure in orange in the top register. The solitary yellow completes the highly cerebral placement of colours. In a painting of the Emperor Babur receiving courtiers by Farrukh Beg, the pinks in the painting form an upward pointing triangle with the emperor at its apex, dressed in pink, and this is intersected with a downward pointing triangle formed by courtiers dressed in green, which creates a hexagram. These paintings show how colour, geometry, and proportion can come together in Mughal art.

In the *Padshah-nama* chromatic structures of this kind re-surface. In a painting of the wedding procession of Prince Dara Shikoh, a triangular formation of jade greens extended to form a larger pattern is accompanied by a

similar design for orange and a triangular design made of three strong yellows, which remain a minor occurrence given the wealth of other colours available.[19] In a painting depicting the arrival of Prince Awrangzeb at the court in Lahore[20] the interplay of magenta with yellow alerts us to the triangular relationship between these areas and the emperor's tunic in that colour. But the colours used in the areas above, below and centre of the painting allow for a fluid transition from upper to lower tiers of the pictorial space and back again. Several other examples of simpler triangulated colour relationships exist in this manuscript.[21]Knowledge of these patterns and colour combinations enables us to look at the famous *A Prince and Sages in a Garden*[22] as a painting firmly rooted in tradition. The triangular balance of orange-reds, the green of the prince's robes contrasted with the rich red of the cushion behind him and the familiar use of the single yellow worn by an attendant far right are part of a shared visual language of colours rooted in Persian classicism, signified also by the use of the hexagonal form. The difference here is that a sense of warm amber light pervades the whole picture and this is achieved by modulating orange, yellow, ochre, and white tones. Such colour relationships are ways of organising pictorial space that are subtle and intelligible. Many of the principles of organising chromatic structures in Persian painting outlined above are to be found rigorously applied in the *Padshah-nama*; this demonstrates a highly self-conscious, one might say, even erudite system of aesthetics, one that interplays with and develops pictorial conventions.

Appendix 3

A principle of colour composition found in Persian and Mughal art may be described as "coupling." This consists of repeating certain colours or combinations of colours in various areas of the pictorial space. This creates a rhythm of repeats in discrete areas of the painting either to form a system of relationships or an overall visual leitmotiv that can make a painting appear immediately harmonious. It is probable that this kind of coupling in Mughal art was learnt from Persia and it may be seen for example in another painting from the *Haft Awrang* (Seven Thrones) of Jami. It depicts Yusuf (Joseph) in a garden with maidens.[23] He is shown in green robes matched only by one other figure in the painting, next to him then pairs of figures in red, maroon, rose and there are two others in blue and in pink. There is the solitary use of yellow, an odd one out. This tends to create the idea of hidden relationships and is an ordering principle (although asymmetrical here) helping to balance the composition, as does the suggestion of the hexagonal figural arrangement. There are examples of the use of rhythmic coupling relationships in pictorial space based on Persian models in Mughal painting. In *The Feast of the King of Yemen* by Aqa Riza,

dated 1604-1610, unusually, there are two blacks, two yellows and two blues and the three reds are at equal distance from each other and they form a regular triangle. In Khusrau and Shirin entertained in the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, a similar kind of coupling of colours is seen.

In the *Padshah-nama* painting of Shah Jahan receiving his three eldest sons four courtiers have been painted in costumes of light emerald green, which have been coupled by another four courtiers in purple.[24] This occurs four times to make a square (even a vermilion has been placed in close proximity to this repeated contrast all four times to further emphasise the spatial dimensions of colour relationships).[25] This is also related to the upper tier of the painting, which shows the emperor in purple. This duplication of a key colour contrast in different areas of the painting happens several times in this manuscript, as does a systematic clustering of colours.[26] In Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return for the Mewar campaign[27] two dominant pinks interplay with two equally noticeable cherry reds; there are also three different shades of green which are repeated. In a painting of the wedding procession of Prince Dara Shikoh[28] the orange of the emperor's tunic contrasts with his footman's in purple, this contrast is repeated to the left of the painting. The combination of jade green and bright orange (an elaboration of the red-green contrast) on the left created by the two attendants carrying candles is repeated on the right hand side of the painting, where two horsemen in the same colours are also contrasted. This also happens for pink and yellow at the bottom right and top left of the painting. Two yellows are used in a symmetrical manner. This deliberate, ingenious chromatic design integrates the different areas of the painting into a series of relationships that engage the viewer. The greens and oranges in particular are arranged in areas that suggest triangular forms.[29]

By the Jahangir period, other colours appeared which reflected refined colour technologies and these were used to create more complex colour harmonies. A magenta coloured robe is worn by Jahangir in the famous picture of *Jahangir Shooting the Head of Malik 'Ambar* 1616;[30] this colour was to become a favourite element in the complex chromatic structures later in the *Padshah-nama.* A purple (*jaman*), also appears more consistently, especially in paintings of Shah Jahan in the *Padshah-nama*.[31] Manohar also often used this colour for Jahangir's robes in several court scenes. One rare and early appearance of this colour for the robes of the emperor is in a late Akbar period but possibly Jahangir-period miniature depicting Akbar seated receiving nobles.[32] The solitary yellow again appears, worn by a seated figure in the foreground. Jahangir is depicted wearing purple in a private audience with Prince Parviz[33] who is dressed in yellow. The *Padshah-nama* has some of the most sophisticated chromatic structures in Islamic art. In a painting of Europeans bringing gifts to Shah Jahan for example,[34] the painting is carefully

modulated on the principle of purple and green contrasts on the left, with minor suggestions of pink, and on the right there are mainly green and yellow contrasts some with interspersed with some pink. This arrangement not only creates an overall colour harmony where colours are distributed evenly, it also establishes and identifies some of the main colour tensions used throughout. The artist has also arranged for two occurrences of vermilion on the left, coupled with two more on the right to give the illusion of random colour placement. Equally complex is the interplay between the deep pinks, greens and reds of the painting of *Jahangir presents Prince Khurram with a turban ornament*,[35] which are interspersed with evenly placed, triangular areas of yellow and orange. Colour is further modulated by the stripes of some tunics that appear to refract these colour values.

The third innovation is the use of a jade colour used for many backgrounds in the allegorical portraits of Jahangir, this may be seen in the example of *Jahangir Shooting the Head of Malik 'Ambar*. It is probable that this type of green was associated with jade as a semi-precious stone and several royal objects, drinking cups for example, were carved out of jade, which also apparently was believed to neutralise poison. Jade is used several times as a background for Jahangir who is dressed in deep pink (a change from his more usual gold tunic or his muslin shirt) and this may be seen as an extension of the traditional red-green colour contrast.[36] It is used numerous times in this period and not only for paintings of the emperor but also for portraits of a good many courtiers. The background colour was also favoured by Shah Jahan several times and may be seen in a portrait of him by Hashim where he is shown with the world beneath his feet and with attendant cherubs.[37] In the pages of the *Padshah-nama*, the inset paintings in allegorical mode of shaykhs holding globes or of lions and ruminants that appear to inhabit spaces below the *jharoka* balcony are usually also infused with this colour.

By the time of the *Padshah-nama*, the interplay of a colour scheme with the patterning of surfaces and geometrical figural arrangements becomes so densely interrelated that trying to understand the language of internal relationships is as difficult to manage as listening to a solitary voice in a room full of conversations, and yet it is immensely rewarding to do so. In many of the paintings there is a highly structured juxtaposition of vermilion and magenta, neither complementary nor matching, but made less dazzling with the clever and systematic buffers of different shades of green, white stripes or modulations of vermilion into orange-red, and magenta into pink or into purple. The stripes are seen often in the *Padshah-nama*, this may or may not reflect a new fashion at court. Nevertheless, Mughal artists skillfully use them to vary colour densities and contrasts. This visual device also has its origin in Persian painting.[38] These clever interventions tend to make the interplay of colours in the infrared

spectrum less fierce. Another colour, used knowingly as a minor key by Payag in *Jahangir presents Prince Khurram with a turban ornament* is yellow, which resolves the tension between magenta and vermilion tones successfully. As if to acknowledge the provocative interplay between the two key colours of magenta and vermilion, Payag has painted two flowers on the wall of the royal balcony, one on the side Jahangir, which is a kind of vermilion marigold flower and on the side of his son, Prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan) he has painted a magenta coloured flower. This odd juxtaposition is repeated in the colour of the turbans, the father wearing vermilion, and the son, magenta, and is further elaborated throughout the painting, from the standard bearers to the right, to the flowers on the carpet below. It reasonable to conclude that the painting is less concerned to show the court ceremonial exactly as it was and more inclined to convey and express an aesthetic sensibility, consisting of an order and design with noticeable balances, counter balances and rich inter-relationships. It is primarily through these aesthetic projections that the event of Jahangir presenting Prince Khurram with a turban ornament at the imperial court should be viewed.

Although the aesthetic of jewel-like colours of high contrast is easily identifiable in Mughal art in all periods, a parallel development based on tints and muted colours can be identified from the late Akbar period. This extremely subtle technique consisted of washes of colour, thinly applied to delineate form. The application of paint was so deliberately thin, indeed sometimes entirely absent, so that the buff coloured paper may be seen. The artist used the colour of the buff or beige coloured paper to achieve flesh coloured tones or an environment of subdued or evenly filtered light. This technique is called *Nim Qalam* or half-pen. Leaving the colour of the paper to show through was also a useful way to suggest hills or dusky skies—all rendered not with paint but with the absence of paint.

This technique has it roots in margin designs of gold that leave large areas of the paper unpainted, appropriately allowing lions or hares to appear in the dull glow of fawn. There are precedents in Persian art. It can be seen, for example, in the *Haft Awrang* of Jami, a painting entitled *Yusuf Tends His Flocks*[39] that depicts a blue-grey horse in the bottom right hand corner. The ground and hills behind the animal are largely rendered by creating a continuity of colour from inside and outside the margin, a colour determined by the colouration of the actual paper. The contiguity of margin with painting is accentuated (or disguised) by the fact that the horse actually appears to break through the margin rules and on the left it provides a background for the pink flowers, which also break into the margin space. While the Mughals did not know of this particular manuscript, its illustrations represent a number of artistic techniques that were generally dispersed among the traditions of Islamic arts of the book.

In the Mughal period many of the animal studies of Mansur leave the paper around the animal figure almost bare, with faint suggestions of contours to depict the background setting. This tends to make the brilliant colouring of such animals, most often painted in profile, and stand out even more than they might otherwise. In *Jahangir Playing Holi*, an atmosphere of heated excitement is expressed with its use of oranges and pinks. The bodies and the faces of the women have the same even, translucent flesh tone, with only a very thin wash of colour and a few highlights the artist has let the natural buff colour of the parchment on which the miniature is painted show through. This creates the impression that they are all enveloped in the same even, soft light.

The buff and earthy coloured tones exposed by the *Nim Qalam* technique became one of the artist Govardhan's favourite techniques in many of his pictures of ascetics in the 1630s. However, in an earlier picture of *A Young Prince and His Wife on a Terrace* 1615-25 Govardhan used the technique as a way to suggest a subdued mood at the end of the day. The muted colour of parchment (and again, in several places the natural paper is left untouched) render the colour of the sky, faces and bodies. It is important to note that this muted style of painting is largely abandoned in the *Padshah-nama* paintings, except those that show a few landscape features. The aim in that manuscript is still to show the resplendence and opulence of the court ceremonial through an aesthetic lens of brilliant colours, contrasts, and balances. The muted palette and the adoption of subtle gradations of pigment are used more conspicuously for rustic scenes of dervishes, soldiers and musicians and mainly in the work of Govardhan and is to be regarded as a development which does not supersede but lies parallel with the use of high-contrast, local areas of high-saturation colour.

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[1] Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 44.

[2] In a dramatic maritime battle of Alexander's naval forces against pirates in a tale from the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, focal points of the battle are created primarily from contrasts between red and green or pink and green throughout the painting. Seyller, *Pearls of the Parrot of India*, pl. XX.

[3] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 3.

[4] Humayun seated in a landscape c. 1645, Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, fig. 246; in a miniature of a figure meant to be Bahram Gur who wears red and green in a Humayun style hat. See Seyller, *Hamza-nama*, cat. 5.

[5] In Babur admiring rock sculptures at Urwa, Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures*, 51 and in a painting of Timur handing the imperial crown to Babur, c. 1630, Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 112 and another portrait c. 1630 in a paler green with red background,

166, pl. 129. There is portrait of Babur with Humayun publ. Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweller's Eye*, pl. 116, no. 51 and in pl. 170, no. 53, a portrait of Jahangir in red and green. The Emperor Awrangzeb is seen in red and green in a portrait published in Basil Gray, *The Arts of India* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), fig. 164.

[6] There are an large number of paintings that show this. See a new king paraded around the town on a white elephant, from a *Kalila u Dimna*, c. 1410 and 1425, in E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pls. 209, and pl. 185 of the celebrated "portrait" of Baysunghur Mirza in an outdoor reception, c. 1429. For other princely portraits in this publication, where the principal figure is in green and red, see pls. 24, 26, 127, 291. But see also, Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweller's Eye*, a prince prostrates himself in front of a darvish (the latter in blue), 1470, pl. 145, no. 41. For Kay Khusrau in a Gilan *Shah-nama*, 1493-94 pl. 105, no. 21 with other examples of this convention from this manuscript: pls. 101, no. 19, and 99, no. 18. There is a painting in the British Museum Add. 27261, f. 295b of the Prince Siyavash in red and green in the trial of fire in direct contravention of the text, which prescribes that he be in white, publ. Basil Robinson, *Persian Miniatures*, pl. III. A painting from Bukhara also continues this princely tradition, see an illustration attributed to Qasim 'Ali c. 1540, in Basil Gray, *Persian Painting Miniatures from XIII.-XVI. Centuries* (New York: Iris Books), pl. 25, for a painting of a prince in bright red and green, possibly by Mir Sayyid 'Ali, c. 1540. A large number appear in red and green, in Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*: Prince Afrasiyab in a painting c. 1440, pl. 26, and a king of Kashmir, Herat c. 1485, pl. 37; and another prince in a painting from Mashad, 1581, pl. 90a, Tabriz 1535, pl. 71c, and 1530, pl. 69. For the king of Istakhr visiting an ascetic, c. 1545 Tabriz, pl. 70a; red and green are used to pick out the Persian King Dara in an illustration painted in Herat, 1519, pl. 191. See also in this publication the depiction of princes in a *Bustan* of Sa'di, pls. 137g, 137h. Red and green for Alexander and Khizr in Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl. 27i and in the *Birth of a Prince*, Herat, c. 1485 pl. 35 and the principle figures, mainly kings, in pls. 45e, 56b, 86a, 86c, 87, 99 and in figs. 9, 10, 11, 22, 26; for Timur in fig. 17. Alexander is seen often in red and green, see for example a painting, publ. Yuri A. Petrosyan, et. al., *Pages of Perfection, Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg* (Lugano: ARCH Foundation: 1995), fig. 4, 95 and from the same *Khamsa* of Nizami, dated 1544 there is also a painting of Shirin seen in the same colours, fig. 3, 95. Iskandar is seen in red and green in a Shiraz *Khamsa* of 1543, Petrosyan, *Pages of Perfection*, 247. Painting for Ibrahim Mirza's studio frequently focussed on the principal figures in red and green, see a *pir* (saint) rejects ducks brought to him as a present by a *murid* (follower) in Marianna Shreve Simpson, *Haft Awrang*, pls. 98, and on other occasions, pls. 152, 102. See also Lentz and Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, for a painting of Khusrau feasting with Shirin in a garden where the red-blue contrast is seen as inferior, reserved for his cupbearer, cat. no. 42, note also the solitary use of yellow and one dark blue and for a Bahram Gur in red and green hunting, cat. no. 62.

[7] Losty, 'Abu'l Hasan' in Pal, ed., *Master Artists*, 83.

[8] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 38 and pl. 5.

[9] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 44.

[10] Musée Guimet Paris, publ. Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 32. See also Akbar giving a sarpech to Jahangir in Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl. 129b.

[11] Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pls. 93, 94.
[12] Shah Jahan examining the imperial seal, Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, fig. 217.
[13] Brend *Khamsa*, fig. 29.
[14] Brend *Khamsa*, fig. 11.
[15] Reversed by an attendant (with blue) at the bottom left and further varied with the attendant far right to create a triangular composition of similarly coupled colours.
[16] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pls. 12-13.
[17] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 32.
[18] Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 54
[19] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 23.
[20] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 44.
[21] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 6, a triangle of greens and pl. 37, a triangle of purple colours, the border of the textile on *jharoka* balcony, the two courtiers beneath in purple turbans. The triangular area can be seen to point down, however, if the attendant bottom left of the painting is taken into account; pl. 38 shows a symmetry of oranges, the flag with its point down, but also the pattern may be extended to include the orange of Shah Jahan's tunic above.
[22] Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, 173
[23] Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC.No. 46.12. See Marianne Shreve-Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 39.
[24] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pls. 10-11.
[25] There is also a tendency in the *Padshah-nama* to create lozenge shapes out of a series of four points obtained by the spatial distancing of four points of the same colour. See Beach and Koch, *Padshah-nama*, , 64, pl. 24, notably the pinks and greens.
[26] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pls. 26 and 15; magenta and yellow as a key contrast repeated several times and thematised in the flags at the centre. For clusters of colours, see, pl. 17, pink, orange, and red, and brown and yellow and the more traditional pink and green colour contrast; pl. 42, two major pinks, two minor, two whites, two light-green, two dark, two yellows, two vermilions. For a simple coupling, see two oranges and pairs of similar greens pl. 19. For a highly complex system of coupling see pl. 46 where the line of figures in various shades of green standing before a fence has been composed by repeating the same shade of brown, green or yellow in the chain of colours.
[27] Note that there are two paintings with the same title, this one published in Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 5.
[28] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 23.
[29] A form of organizing pictorial space which was also probably learnt from Persian art. One of the earliest examples of this kind of strategic use of colour is a fourteenth century illustration from a *Masnavi* of Khwaju Kirmani British Library. Add. 18113, f. 91r, see E. Sims, et. al., *Peerless Images*, pl. 105. Other examples are a painting from a manuscript of Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nama* from Shiraz, 1552, Sims, 197 pl. 110 and in a double page composition c. 1575 Qazvin, which also shows clearly the principles of coupling and triangulation, see Sims, *Peerless Images*, pl. 145. See also, an *Habib Al-Siyar*, Safavid dynasty, Qazwin, Iran, now Smithsonian Institution. Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler,

S1986.47, a particularly complex triangulation of orange reds, blue and yellows, red and greens. The figures are also arranged in small triangular relationships.

[30] P. Pal, *Master Artists*, 77.

[31] Shah Jahan stands out wearing it as Prince Khurram attacking a lion and in other illustrations in the same manuscript by Balchand, see Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 30 and also in pl. 10. See also a dynastic portrait of Shah Jahan in purple receiving Mughal crown from Akbar in Okada, *Imperial Mughal Painters*, pl. 32. Akbar's ruling planet was Jupiter corresponding to the colour purple/violet and yellow. The colour, possibly a form of indigo, has a long history and may be seen in painting as early as 1411 in the pages of the Anthology of Iskandar Sultan, British Library.

[32] *Akbar Receiving Mirza 'Aziz Koka* Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS. 34.2. In terms of composition, portraiture, and the use of purple the picture appears to be much later than is commonly assumed (c. 1602-04).

[33] BM 1920. 9-17. 02.

[34] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 19.

[35] Beach and Koch, *Padshahnama*, pl. 39

[36] J. Losty, 'Abu'l Hasan', in Pal, *Master Artists*, 77 for a Jahangir period painting of Akbar with similar contrasts see T. McInerney, 'Manohar' 66 in Pal, *Master Artists.*

[37] Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC. 39.49.

[38] The *Battle Between Arjasp and Gushtasp*, f. 270 in the Mohammad Juki *Shah-nama;* used also by Nanha in a painting of the battle of the clans, see Brend, fig. 18 and again by Nanha in the *Jahangir-nama* c. 1618, see Stronge, *Painting for the Emperor*, pl. 89.

[39] Simpson, *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage*, 37

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